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MADAM DORRINGTON

OF THE DENE:

THE STORY OF A LIFE.

BY

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"THE HALL AND THE HAMLET,"

"THE YEAR BOOK OF THE COUNTRY," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,

GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1851.

LONDON

Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

MADAM DORRINGTON,

OF

THE DENE.

CHAPTER I.

GRACE DELMEY'S abode in London extended to about two years. We must make a short account of it, though it was a very important portion of her life, and left many pleasant and sad impressions on her heart for all her future life.

In a few days, Andrew Harrison returned to Lerk, having most completely fulfilled all the injunctions of Farmer Greatorex regarding his fair charge. Spite of a somewhat cold and formal manner in Madam Van Orren, Grace Delmey soon began to feel that there was a good and kind nature in her. She began to

like her, and felt that she was liked in return. Her aunt had, of late years, lived a good deal alone, and seemed to want a neighbour-heart that she could find a kindred feeling in. Her house was handsome and handsomely furnished, but it had the neat, quiet, and somewhat prim air of the abode of a single or a widow lady. Not a chair, or a book, or a chimney-ornament, was ever to be seen out of its place. There was a man-servant and a parlour-maid, that went about as quietly, and put and kept all in order, as if there was somebody always ill in the house, who could not bear a noise. There was a little dog that basked on the hearth-rug, and a large tortoise-shell cat that slept on a footstool on one side of the fire-place—that were as neat, orderly, and quiet, as their mistress and her servants. But there was no want of any luxury or comfort in that still abode—still as it was internally, but constantly surrounded by the roar of the city, like an islet in a stormy sea. The old lady sate with her book on a reading-stand, often a large book, her Bible or a volume of South's or Atterbury's Sermons, near the window, where she could see all that went on in the street below. It seemed to be a peculiar refreshment and relaxation to her to turn her

attention alternately from this world to the other, and from the other again to this.

Grace would sit with her sewing, and ever and anon the old lady would say, suddenly : “ Well, that is very fine now—very fine indeed !” And Grace would have to look up to see what the fine thing was—whether it was something in the street, or in the author before her. Then the old lady would add : “ Ha ! if we could but live up to that !” or “ Really one never hears such sermons now-a-days !” Or she was just as likely to say : “ Oh ! run, run, niece, directly. See that strange Turk there ! What an odd mortal ! What do those outlandish people dress in that tawdry, half-womanish way for ? But run, girl, run—there ! I knew you’d be too late. He’s gone !” Perhaps, by the time Grace had regained her seat or before it, the old lady would again cry : “ Well, that is grander than ever ! What an idea ! Where did these old people get such things from ?”

“ What things, aunt ? Where are they ?” would Grace exclaim, running forward, before she perceived that her aunt was lost in a reverie of admiration over her sermons.

“ Oh ! such divine sentiments !—such just, and deep, and uncommon reflections, and yet

so true!" Whereupon she would read out a passage, and then stopping to wipe her spectacles, and re-adjust them, while Grace was endeavouring to digest the sermon, would abruptly exclaim: "Look! look! what's that crowd? Why, sure, they have taken a thief! Ay, there I see him! I see him! Run, girl, run, or they will be gone. Oh! what a savage, hairy, hang-dog fellow! Bless the Lord for good laws and magistrates, or what would become of us?" And the pendant to this would be some strange, dismal story of some robbery and murder, committed in some part of London, in which she declared that no decent person dare trust himself.

"How can you, dear aunt, like London so?" Grace would inquire, "where there are such places, and such horrible people?"

"Oh, child," the old lady would reply, "that's only the fag-end of it. There are plenty of magistrates and strong laws to keep them in order. And then think what a city this is, with its Lord Mayor and all its Aldermen, and its merchants—Lord Mayor's shows, and grand dinners, where the King and Queen, and great ministers come—and city balls, and all this life and stir—there's no place like it. You must

go to the Lord Mayor's Ball, niece. I don't go to such places now ; but Mr. Khesteven, who declares himself your knight-errant—nice young man !—and the Harrisons, will take you. Oh, what people have I seen there in my time ! As fine men and women as ever stood in shoe-leather—and princes and parliament men—Chatham—ay, that was a famous man !—and Burke, and Fox, and Johnny Wilks, and Alderman Beckford, who made that famous speech to the King, as you may see on his statue in Guildhall. Wait, child, wait, till you have seen London, before you talk.”

Daily, if the weather was fine, Madam Van Orren took her drive in her coach before dinner ; sometimes into one suburb, and sometimes into another, and occasionally into the parks. By this means, Grace came to see a good deal of London ; and in the evenings her aunt set her to read to her, for her own eyes failed by candle-light. As those readings were intended to be amusing as well as instructive to her niece, they read here and there in the works of the great authors, whom Madam Van Orren had known, selecting what she considered their finest passages ; and Grace pursued the reading in her own room, according as she liked the au-

thor ; for she perceived that, in the voluminous writings of Fielding, Richardson, Johnson, and Goldsmith, she had a long task before her. These evening readings were particularly delightful to Grace Delmey, as her aunt continually stopped her to relate what she knew of these writers, including many anecdotes of them that had never reached the public.

Fielding she had seen in her earlier youth, and related the strange aversion that he and Richardson had to meet each other. How Richardson called Fielding a worldly and dissipated spendthrift—vulgar, he insisted, vulgar and disreputable : and Fielding called Richardson a moping milksop—a poor dawdling woman's man, fit for nothing but tea and old wives' gossip. Once she had seen them meet at Mr. Khesteven's, at a great and brilliant party, but they only made a distant bow to each other, and gave a dark scowl, and then Richardson got away as soon as he could, and Fielding got, before the night was over, very tipsy, and talked like a justice of the peace.

And then that dear old Dr. Johnson, that Mrs. Thrale used to bring over from Muswell Hill in her carriage, to their country-house at Hampstead, where he spoke like an oracle, and set

everybody down. And how he would talk to her, Madam Van Orren, then quite a young thing, of the church and the Bible, and bid her stand fast by them, and ask her where she came from, and would then say :

“So, so ; why that is almost in my county : you are almost a country-woman of mine. I shall like you.”

And thereafter, he always asked for his little country-woman, and brought her new books. She wondered to find him so kind, and yet she was always so afraid of him.

And Goldy, poor dear Goldy, as Dr. Johnson called him. Madam Van Orren would burst into a fit of laughter often as she related her astonishment the first time she saw him :

“I was a young thing, Grace, like you,” she said, “and was at my aunt’s house at Hampstead. It was in very fine warm weather, in the summer. The garden-gate bell rung, and as the servant went to open it, I was standing at the window. The moment the gate opened, in marched two odd fellows, and commenced running down the garden towards the house, taking a circuit round a large flower-bed, instead of coming directly onwards to the door, like two schoolboys chasing each other in fun. The one

was a queer, broad-built, Irishman, with a most extraordinary phiz, cocking a little snub-nose and chin up into the air, and laughing and shouting as he came along. The other was a small, slim man, in threadbare black, that seemed to run because his comical companion ran ; but whose pale face and greyish hair did not give you any idea of playfulness or joviality. But there was not much time for thinking about them. Up the steps they came, and bouncing into the house, were in another minute entering the room where I was, the strange Irishman saying, in a hurried, laughing voice, as he came in :

“ ‘ Well, here we are, Madam Fludyer ! All hot ! all hot ! ’ But on seeing me, he suddenly stopped ; looked very much astonished, and very awkward, but not more awkward than I felt.

“ There stood the short, thick man, with the oddest face—red as a fire ; his bald head covered with perspiration—he had flung down his hat in the hall.

“ And now making a succession of low, awkward bows, he said :

“ ‘ Oh, I beg your pardon, ma’am—I thought—really ! I thought it was Madam Fludyer, but I see—I see, it’s quite another—excuse us, young lady—it’s only Peter Barlow and myself.’ ”

“Who Peter Barlow and myself were I should have been dreadfully puzzled to know, but the maid hastening in after these singular strangers, set chairs with great respect, and said :

“ ‘ Pray be seated, Dr. Goldsmith—be seated, Mr. Barlow—I will call Mrs. Fludyer.’

“Dr. Goldsmith ! Could that, then, really be the celebrated Dr. Goldsmith ! The strange man sate down, fanning himself with his handkerchief. His shirt neck was open ; his throat red with the sun ; his loose, short coat, and knee-breeches, being of very remarkable colours, and his shoes and stockings covered with dust. His companion, the thin pale man, with a timid air, drew his chair somewhat behind that of the Doctor ; there he seated himself, and seemed half frightened at the situation in which he found himself. But the Doctor, recovered from his surprise, began talking with his humble companion :

“ ‘ Pest on this Hampstead Hill, Peter ; it is a broiler this weather. I hope Madam Fludyer has something very cool. Oh, here she is !’ and my aunt appearing, up jumped the Doctor, and shaking her boisterously by the hand, began to talk and laugh again at a great rate.

“ ‘ We’re off on a tradesman’s holiday, Peter

Barlow and I; Garrick, Reynolds and Percy, are to meet us at Hendon. But they go grandly in a carriage there. Fine fellows—Madam Fludyer—fine fellows, those! Peter and I have walked up from the Temple. Gad! but it is a broiler, though; and we determined to run in and see what you could give us to cool us. A bottle of cyder, or a glass of sherry and water, or the like—eh?’

“My aunt soon had something of the kind up, with strawberries, and the jolly Doctor rattled on.

“‘We are going to stroll about in the fields at Hendon—round by Finchley—dine at Cannonbury with Newbery, and then home by moonlight. Come, Peter, drink man, we must be off—our fine fellows in their coach must not wait of us.’ Peter nodded a timid good health to my aunt and me, and drank. ‘Madam Fludyer, we will take the rest of these strawberries with us—they are grand! Here, Peter, pour them into my handkerchief,’ and with that, the Doctor spread his handkerchief on the table; and Peter Barlow being too much embarrassed to pour out the strawberries very quickly, Goldsmith did it himself; and with the handkerchief swinging in his hand, he bade

a boisterous good-by, and away he and his shadow, Peter, went as boyishly as they came.

“And that was the author of the ‘Deserted Village,’ and of ‘The Vicar of Wakefield!’ My aunt laughed at my astonishment, and told me I should see many such frolics on the part of the boy-hearted poet; but that I should come to love him, for he was all generosity and goodness. And truly her words were correct.”

Such were the evening readings and conversations of Grace and her aunt, now herself the old lady. On Sundays they regularly joined Mr. Khesteven and his family at church, and went home with them to dine. The more Grace saw of the old gentleman, and his daughter and son-in-law, the more she liked them. The gentlemanly and quiet humour of Mr. Khesteven—the grave respectfulness of John Harrison, and the loving heart and sisterly manner of Mrs. Harrison, soon made Grace feel a warm affection for them all. Almost every fine day Mr. Khesteven and Mrs. Harrison now called in their drives, and took up her aunt and herself; and made a point to shew Grace some of the wonders of the City and neighbourhood—Guildhall, the Monument, the Tower; in the other direction, the great inns of court, where

the lawyers were, Somerset House, the Palace, and the Parks. On one occasion they took her to see the great warehouses and the docks. Not such as they are now, but such as filled the mind with the most extraordinary wonder. The vast range of buildings filled with the products of all climes; the heaps of elephants tusks in one; the drugs and essential oils in others, filling the air with their medicinal odours—the spices, the mountains of tobacco, the wilderness of sugars, sagos, rice, teas and coffees. They led her through the immense cellars, comprising many acres each where the wines of the merchants are stored. Through immense streets of large butts and pipes, each couple of them worth, at least, three hundred pounds; amongst which torches were flitting here and there like will-o'-wisps, and from the black arches above depending o'er them the long masses of cobwebby funguses—the growth of ages. These scenes filled Grace's mind with the most overwhelming ideas of the wealth of the London merchants and the power of the country.

On another occasion Mr. Khesteven, accompanied by his daughter, took her to see the interior of St. James's, and made her sit down,

both on the throne and afterwards at the Mews, in the royal coach. On his bidding her do each of these things, the royal menial, who showed them round, said, solemnly: "That is not allowed, Sir;" and Grace, in the act of obeying the old merchant, again shrank back in fear. But Mr. Khesteven only said: "Pooh! pooh! never mind that, my dear, nobody helps to pay for these things more than I do: do as I tell you," and the servant offering no further opposition, partly because he noticed the words of Mr. Khesteven, and thought him some great man, and partly because he felt in his palm, at the same moment, an impression that wonderfully confirmed that conviction, Grace Delmey and then Mrs. Harrison sate on the royal throne, and afterwards in the royal carriage, Mr. Khesteven saying, as they went away:

"There, Miss Delmey, if ever you return to the country, it will be something to astonish the natives with, to say you have sate on the King's throne, and ridden in his carriage."

But now it was drawing on for Christmas, and Mr. Khesteven and his family were going to spend the Christmas week at his house at Mortlake, and Mrs. Van Orren and Grace were to go with them. Only two days before Christ-

mas Day the party set off, in order that Mr. Harrison might accompany them, and yet leave business as little as possible. At ten o'clock on the morning appointed, the family carriage, with four horses, was drawn up at Mr. Khesteven's door, whither Madam Van Orren and Grace had betaken themselves, and the whole family party entering the splendid and capacious family vehicle, were whirled away through London westward, at a rapid rate. Mr. Khesteven, Mr. and Mrs. Harrison, Madam Van Orren, and Grace all found themselves face to face in this ample carriage, along with the two children; the nurse-maid and the other servants following in another carriage and pair, close behind.

Though Grace had seen the mode of life of the Khestevens in London, had seen their huge warehouses, and the London Docks and warehouses themselves, and had a certain conviction of the great wealth of the family, she never seemed to realize the idea of it so much as when whirled away in this magnificent style through London. If merchants did this, what could nobles do more? They were not hampered with luggage; all that was gone on, with a world of plate, before in a light van, and under guard of men armed with blunderbuses.

In wonderfully little time they had traversed the Strand, Piccadilly, Knightsbridge, Fulham, and were careering over the wooden bridge at Putney. Here they paused awhile to note the wild look of the scene. The winter had set in early in November with such severity that the Thames had been frozen over for a fortnight. A sudden thaw had again broken up the ice, when nearly a foot thick, and it had been driven with such force against the piers of the bridge ; that one huge slab had slid upon the back of another, and the frost as suddenly setting in again, there they stood, a wilderness of great masses of ice, hurled up edgeways, some yards above the water, a perfect chaos of icebergs, threatening to push away the bridge, and presenting a scene of extraordinary wildness.

Having wondered at this sight, they again dashed along the lower heath, all white with the wintry snow, and soon reached Mortlake. Here they halted a moment at a neat lodge, and but a moment, for a woman sprung out of the lodge, opened wide the gate, with a deep courtesy, and they found themselves in a fine park, with a noble house before them.

Grace again wondered at the splendour of the London merchant's country residence. Why it

was a mansion fit for an Earl. Everything within corresponded with the situation and exterior. The house was large, superbly furnished, and there were fires burning in all the rooms for their reception. Grace soon discovered that there were stables and out-buildings in keeping with the splendour of the place, and extensive conservatories and forcing-houses, in which the most beautiful flowers were blooming, spite of the severe weather without. Again Grace could not but marvel how people, who had such dwellings in the country, could bury themselves in the city, and in such close places as Bread Street. But she did not reflect how much was due to long habit, to mercantile taste, mercantile pride, and how much of the wealth which built and enlivened these luxurious palaces, flowed from that city occupation.

“Oh! my dear Mrs. Harrison,” said Grace, after surveying these things, “how can Mr. Khesteven and yourself like to stay so much in London, when you have such a place as this?”

“It is necessary, you know,” replied Mrs. Harrison, in perfect simplicity, “to be near business.”

“How can it be necessary,” said Grace, “when you are already so rich?”

Her friend had never thought of it. She felt a momentary astonishment, and then with a smile added :

“ Well, I don’t know, but papa thinks it necessary, and Mr. Harrison does too. They would not like to leave the old concern and be idle.”

Grace was going to say : “ Why need they be idle ? how many things can gentlemen find to do ; ” but she checked herself. She felt that people would be idle, and miserable too, if they ceased to do that which they had a real taste for. Her friends had a taste for merchandise and city life, and it was folly to reason against it. It had, no doubt, its great charms : it gave wealth, influence, importance. It employed people, kept commerce in motion, ships going to and fro, as the uniting link of nations ; employed thousands and millions of people, diffusing comfort through thousands of homes. It bought estates and founded families. She began to perceive that trade has its large and fascinating side.

“ And,” continued Mrs. Hetty Harrison, as if falling into Grace’s train of thought, “ we can come here as often as we like. In summer we shall be chiefly here, and you, dear Grace,

will come and stay with us. I long to show you what nice country there is not far off, and to drive about our lanes and commons with you. Mr. Khesteven spends the greater part of his time here in summer, and John drives to and fro every day to business."

"But what a distance!" said Grace.

"Oh! it is nothing," replied Mrs. Harrison. "When there are good horses, and plenty of them, it is a refreshment."

Christmas Day was spent as a family festival. No one was invited from the immediate neighbourhood; but different branches of the family, cousins, nephews, nieces, and others of whom Grace had never heard, came down from town, with some intimate friends, to spend the day. In the morning all went to church; in the evening there were dining, dancing, all sorts of old English sports, jollity, and merriment. Mr. Khesteven seemed everywhere, and quite radiant with good cheer, good humour, and hospitality. Beds were made up for all the guests from town, so that none need have the care on their minds of the long, dark journey home; and all was gaiety and gladness.

The next day these friends took their leave, and the acquaintances of the vicinity called to

welcome Mr. Khesteven and his family to their circle for the Christmas holidays. Large parties were given and gone to, and Grace again wondered to find that even nobles did not scruple to associate with the wealthy London merchant. Here, Mr. Khesteven appeared like a noble amongst nobles. Not one of the aristocratic class possessed a better house, kept a better table, or showed more good breeding in manner and conversation. Mr. Khesteven had entertained many of his wealthy and titled neighbours at the Mansion-House, when Lord Mayor. In town, and here too, he had entertained all the leading statesmen, wits, and lawyers of his time. Here, he was an immensely wealthy aristocrat amongst aristocrats. He had sate in Parliament; he might, no doubt, had it been his ambition, have sate in the higher house. Nothing were easier for him than to live on large estates in the country—he possessed them—to have taken his stand entirely with the titled class, to have married his only daughter amongst the highest of them. But he had married her to John Harrison, the son of the little shopkeeper of Lerk, and he still loved to ally himself and his descendants with trade.

Grace Delmey felt that there was a pride in the British merchant, great as could exist in the British noble, and she received new views of human nature. There were men, she saw—and Mr. Khesteven was one of them—who chose to be merchants, and did not choose to be *noblesse*; and when that ambition was literally and honourably indulged, it was an ambition that she was compelled to respect. There was something most piquant and attractive to her, in looking at her friend, Mrs. Harrison—lively, sensible, extremely well-informed, with a refined elegance of manner, that would have sate well on a princess of the blood: yet so simple, so unassuming, so rarely referring to anything connected with her amazing wealth, that it seemed a thing that she never thought of. At one time she saw her sitting amid a very brilliant company, gentle, modest, yet quite self-assured; at another, playing with her children on the hearth; at another, rambling with her and them through the grounds; and in after months, on the heaths and in the woods, with the unaffected delight of a country girl.

Such a character, in its genuineness, had never been conceived of by her. It was evident, that with her father, her children, and

her husband, she could be just as happy, just the same in every respect, with a few hundreds a-year, as she was now with hundreds of thousands. She was one of those gentle, yet bright creatures, that draw out love and sunshine wherever they go. All hearts are warmed by them, and Grace every day loved, with a deeper and more tender affection, her new friend. When they returned to town, after a fortnight's stay at Mortlake, they became more and more necessary to each other. They were like sisters—they knew each other intimately: they had learned each other by heart.

CHAPTER II.

BUT during that fortnight at Mortlake, Grace had attracted great attention. She had met with several young gentlemen at almost every party she had been at: they had been constant visitors at Mr. Khesteven's, and every one saw that she was the object of the liveliest admiration. It was not long after their return to town, that two of these made direct offers of marriage, and they were such as Grace would never have aspired to, or found, in her native neighbourhood. One, in particular, the eldest son of the wealthy Sir Thomas Taunton, Mr. Khesteven himself strongly recommended. He was a young man of superior mind, and heir to title

and a large estate. Madam Van Orren congratulated her niece on her good fortune, and seconded the addresses of the young man with all her heart. Mrs. Harrison also threw in her entreaties, and rejoiced in the prospect of thus keeping her dear friend so near her, and so auspiciously settled. But Grace hesitated, begged time to think, and declined.

She had learned from home that things were growing more and more miserable; that her mother was becoming, from month to month, more self-willed; that her brothers were leading a life of waste and dissipation, and that her father was gradually sinking into a dejection and melancholy that made life a burden. She had, in itself, no taste for town-life—she longed for the country: she coveted no high rank or wealth; all she longed for was to be near, and to soothe, by all the means in her power, the desolate path of her father. She had, moreover, in various benevolent visits with Mrs. Harrison, seen such awful glimpses of the stupendous misery and crime of the swarming population of certain vast districts of the metropolis, that she shrunk from the idea of it with pain and horror, and yearned for the peace and purity of the country, and for those moderate

groupings of existence, which were capable of being grasped by individual benevolence.

Grace Delmey's resolution excited wonder and disappointment amongst all her friends. Mr. Khesteven asked his daughter whether Grace had not some prior attachment in the country, and wondered still more when he was answered, No. Mrs. Harrison said all that the warmest affection could suggest to alter Grace's determination ; and Madam Van Orren all that interest could dictate. She declared that if Grace would accept Mr. Taunton, she would give her three thousand pounds as a dowry, and make her her heiress. At this unexpected kindness, Grace Delmey was totally overcome. She embraced her aunt with the most affectionate and grateful emotions, and assured her that she would take time and endeavour to inspire herself with a favourable view of this certainly brilliant proposal. But the paleness of Grace showed that the struggle was costing her the keenest suffering—yet how it might have terminated, is uncertain, had not a certain person appeared on the stage, who threw fresh weight into the scale of Grace's mind, which already leaned homewards, opened afresh all her yearnings and imaginations towards the

unhappy Fulbourne and her father, and gave the final and unalterable decision to her will.

This person was Mr. Dorrington, of Westwood, a young lawyer, of the country town of ——. Grace's father, it seemed, had employed the firm in which Mr. Dorrington was then junior partner, to come to a clear explanation with Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe as to the real state of Mr. Delmey's affairs in his hands; to learn what money he had advanced, and on what security. This Mr. Delmey felt compelled to do, in order to stop the ruinous career of his wife and sons. There was no safety for him while Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe had any power or plea for making advances. Mr. Delmey, therefore, resolved to know the worst, and to remove his affairs from Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe to Darwin and Dorrington. In this commission he had selected Mr. Dorrington as a young man of great reputation for talent and integrity, and more especially as a neighbour who had himself an hereditary estate to work clear of encumbrances; and Mr. Dorrington had managed so successfully, that he was enabled to place before Mr. Delmey a full statement of the exact position of his property, and to procure the necessary sum on mortgage, to disentangle him

from Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe, and to place a legal restraint on Mr. Delmey's family.

Mr. Dorrington, having occasion to visit town on business, was intrusted with letters from Mr. Delmey to Grace. The young lawyer had, no doubt, heard much of Grace from her father, it is certain that he was at once deeply struck by her presence. Coming, too, just at the juncture when her mind was agitated between the temptations at hand and the longings for return to her native scenes, he had a powerful pleader in Grace's own heart, for any prayer in his own behalf. He had been much with her father—sympathized with him in his troubles—could tell her much about him, his appearance, his tone of mind, his despondency and yearnings after his daughter's return. Grace knew Mr. Dorrington by name as the proprietor of the old and beautiful estate of the Dene. He came before her as an old acquaintance, though never before seen. He was from the same beloved neighbourhood, could tell her all about it, could admire with her its beauties, and respond to her wishes to return and live there, and there alone.

These were dangerous circumstances—and they were still more so when backed by the manly form, and handsome, intelligent features

of the young man. Her father was zealous in his praise: his ability, tact, firmness, and high character for integrity, he dwelt on again and again in his letters. What he should have done but for his generous and indefatigable exertions, he did not know. These were wonderful words for Grace in the then mood of her mind; and when Mr. Dorrington, before leaving town, avowed his attachment, Grace only asked leave to communicate the proposal to her father. He ardently sanctioned it, and she decided—decided to return to Westwood, and to live there for her own people, and for her father.

We may imagine what was the disappointment of Grace's friends in town, when this came to be known. Mr. Khesteven, with all his kindness and gallantry, looked grave upon it; said there was really no accounting for tastes; thought Miss Delmey had had more sense, and was stiff and distant. Mrs. Harrison shed some tears at the thought that she should lose Grace, but embraced her with affectionate warmth, and said, certainly Grace was the only proper judge of her own chance of happiness, and defended her against all complaints and criticisms. But as for Madam Van Orren! alas! poor Grace! but it was a trying affair.

The old lady had been loud in her praises, and zealous in her attentions to the young lawyer. He was a fine, handsome, sensible fellow ! She was proud of him as a specimen of the men her native place could produce. She knew his family—a most ancient, and very honourable family—and his estate of the Dene—ah ! that was a fine, old, magnificently timbered, quite aristocratic thing. Such views, such a genuine old English house, such grandeur, such rich lands ; in short, such a paradise of a place ! But the moment that the dear old lady discovered the truth, and that her niece had made up her mind to go down and be the Eve of this paradise, how wonderfully her note changed.

“ Hang, that young upstart lawyer ! If she had known what he was after, he should never have darkened her doors ! ”

“ But then,” said Mrs. Harrison, “ you have confessed that Mr. Dorrington is really a fine, clever young man, and then think of his beautiful place, as you describe it, Madam Van Orren.”

“ Hang the place ! ” replied Madam Van Orren. “ I don’t think it is so fine after all—and every body knows that it is heavily mortgaged. What business had the man—and he’s nothing at all particular, neither—what busi-

ness had he to come sneaking in here, and thrust himself between Grace and such a match? What can the girl see in him? But girls now-a-days are bewitched; they really have no sense, as they used to have." Here Mrs. Harrison smiled. Grace was not present, she was crying hard up stairs, having had all this over to herself before Mrs. Harrison came in. "But, hem! I've done with Grace Delmey. She's her mother's own; she's no real Delmey. She's a heartless, ungrateful creature. She does not value me at all. Well! she'll be no gainer by it; somebody else will be all the better for it. Somebody that has more sense and—gratitude!"

Here Madam Van Orren gave an angry bounce in her seat, shook out her silk dress, endeavoured to flirt off several atoms of dust that were not there; rapped the little fat dog on the nose with her fan, as it leaped up against her wondering what was the matter; and looked desperately indignant and immensely ill-used.

Mrs. Hetty Harrison put in some loving words, and a few affectionate tears and smiles in Grace's behalf, and said that it was very natural that Grace should wish to settle near her own family.

"Unnatural! my dear, unnatural, you mean,"

retorted Madam Van Orren, indignantly. "What are her friends to her there? Was she not obliged to fly from them? Is not her mother a fury, a termagant, a tyrant. Are not —"

"But her father, dear Madam Van Orren! What a comfort to her father will it be to have Grace near him!"

"Pooh! pooh!" replied Madam Van Orren, for she was determined to be angry. "What can she do for him? She will be with her husband—at the county-town, seven miles off. What could she do if she were with him, except to be insulted and ill-treated with him. Ah! poor Frank, nothing can help him. He made just as wise a choice as this silly child of his has done. You'll see, my dear Hetty; you'll see, what a mess there will be."

Madam Van Orren was conjuring up calamities now rapidly; she was in the vein for it, and might soon advance to something terrible—it was not easily to be forgiven, that Grace had deprived her of the opportunity of saying, "My niece, Lady Taunton!" so Mrs. Harrison let her alone for the time, and took her leave. But the gentle sun of her loving spirit did not cease to diffuse its melting rays around her—in smiles, in quiet words, in affectionate attentions to

Grace—that softly, imperceptibly, and irresistibly stole over the colder or more angry moods of those around her—and produced in a very few weeks such a change that you would no longer have been able to perceive that Grace had done anything to wound the feelings of her friends, but rather that she must have done something particularly to please them. They had had their feelings hurt by Grace's decision, and in their vexation they had hurt hers. They had seen her suffer, and that sisterly tenderness of Mrs. Harrison had made them feel how harsh they had been, and all became anxious to make amends.

Mr. Khesteven was once more gay, jovial, gallant, and, at the same time, fatherly. He declared he must go down and see Mrs. Dorrington of the Dene, when she was once installed there; and Madam Van Orren, though she no longer said anything of making Grace her heiress, was loving and obviously desirous to make Grace's stay with her as happy as possible for the time.

It was now the season when she removed to her country-house at Hampstead, and Grace greatly enjoyed their rambles there on the heath, about old-fashioned North End, where

Richardson had written his works, and in the neighbouring woods. She was often, too, with Mrs. Harrison at Mortlake, and they drove and rambled about in the green lanes of Surrey, in the park at Richmond, and the pleasant meadows of Twickenham, by the cheerful Thames, and visited Hampton Court and Windsor in more distant excursions. Thus rolled on the summer smoothly; all clouds had passed from the minds of the London friends, and in the following spring, Mr. Dorrington made his last visit, received the hand of Grace Delmey at the altar of old Bow Church, and bore her back to her native neighbourhood.

On this occasion Mr. Khesteven insisted on giving the wedding breakfast, and there Grace found all her more intimate London friends assembled to bid her adieu. It was conducted with a splendour befitting the marriage of a princess; and in the centre of the table stood a pile of rich presents from every member of the family, and from other friends. The old gentleman was more than usually gay, and declared that he had rather Mr. Dorrington had robbed him of any woman in London, except his own daughter. Madam Van Orren, as her niece was about to step into the carriage, begged her

to accept of a purse containing money enough to pay the expenses of the journey home. On Grace examining its contents, so soon as she could think of anything but the friends she had left, or see anything for her tears, how great was her astonishment to find them consist of three bank notes of one thousand pounds each. What her aunt had promised her to induce her to marry as she wished, she now gave as a proof of her thorough reconciliation, though she had never said a word more on the subject.

But this was not the only token of the affection that Grace had found in London. She was now going at once to the Dene, and to the immediate neighbourhood of her father, through a proof of friendship such as none but those equally wealthy in heart and in pocket could bestow.

One day, as Hetty Harrison and Grace had made an excursion to St. Anne's-Hill, and were seated there under a tree, the heather blooming at their feet, full of its sounding bees, and the rich landscape lying stretched in beauty far around them :

“How happy,” said Mrs. Harrison, “will you be at that charming Dene, my dear Grace.

I am so glad it is so sweet a place, so much of your enjoyment depends on a beautiful nature."

"Ah, but my dear Hetty," replied Grace, "that is a pleasure I must not calculate on for some years. Mr. Dorrington tells me that it is still deeply in debt. Ten thousand pounds he has yet to clear off, and he would not feel justified in occupying it till at least five thousand is paid off. Till then we must live in the county-town where Mr. Dorrington's business is."

"Oh, what a pity! what a shame! what a sin!" exclaimed Mrs. Harrison. "*You* compelled to live in the town! You, whose soul is so knit to the country, to flowers, to the music of birds, to all that is sweet, and fresh, and fair! I cannot bear to think of it! No, no! you must at once insist on going to the Dene! You must make it an absolute condition!"

Grace smiled.

"My dearest Hetty, it is well for you to say so, with your hundreds of thousands; but there is such a thing as duty—nobody, dearest Hetty, knows that better than you. There is a pleasure in doing that duty; and though it would be delightful to me—oh, *how* delightful!—how consolatory to be near my dear father: to be

able to see him every day ; to have him coming in as to a refuge from all troubles ; and to see him enjoy his books and his simple tastes for quietness, thought, and nature ; yet, it is a duty to postpone that satisfaction, and I shall find my pleasure in it."

" Oh, that is all very well," replied Mrs. Harrison, rising up, briskly spreading out her fan, as if feeling a sudden heat, and fanning herself as she looked round, as though she would seek something ; and then sitting down again, and laying her hand on Grace's :

" My dear Grace, I am going to ask a favour—it is rather a great one—but you must promise to grant it—will you? But, however, you *must*, our friendship depends on it. I am resolved it shall be so ; and, as I think of it, I never asked a favour of you before. No ! I did not ask you, at least, I did not insist on you, having Mr. Taunton, or staying with us, as perhaps I ought ; so this is my first demand, and if you like, it shall be the last."

" But I cannot promise, Hetty," said Grace, laughing ; " for I know what it is before you speak it—you want me to promise that I will make it a *sine quâ non* with Mr. Dorrington, that I go at once to the Dene."

“To be sure ! why not ?” said Mrs. Harrison, quickly.

“Because it is too late, even if I were so unreasonable. I have engaged to marry Mr. Dorrington unconditionally, unreservedly, except on one point—that my father shall, if necessary, always have a home with me.”

“Yes, yes, that is quite right: you always think of others, Grace ; but I must and will think of you. I must take your lover in hand, if you won’t oblige me.”

“Oh, pray do, Hetty,” said Grace, laughing, and kissing her friend at the same moment. “But what shall it be about ?”

“About ! Why, of course, about your going to the Dene at once.”

Grace shook her head.

“It cannot be.”

“It can be, and must be,” replied Mrs. Harrison. “It *shall* be ! or really you and I—no, not you and I, but I and Mr. Dorrington, will quarrel. But,” added she, looking into Grace’s grave face, as gravely, but with a look full of love, “I have a thought, dear Grace, and it is this, and you shall oblige me in it. I will lend you a little sum—five thousand pounds—you shall have it free of interest—your love for me

shall be the interest—and you shall keep it as long as you please. I think when you put that into Mr. Dorrington's hand, he will not object to settle at the Dene."

Grace looked for a moment with a look at her friend, which cannot be described. It was a look of wonder, love, and a score of thoughts which at once started up, went a score of ways, and far off, and yet in another moment all meeting in her bosom; she clasped her friend in her arms, and was speechless with grateful affection. Then suddenly wiping away the tears that blinded and choked her, she said:

"Oh! my dearest Hetty, what a noble, generous, devoted soul you are! How kind, how very kind! how like you, dear Hetty. But it never will do. I would accept your offer—and I do accept it, with all my heart, for myself—I accept it in the same true spirit of friendship in which you have made it—in that warm gush of delicious feeling which went through me at the first sight of you, my dearest Hetty, and which will be one of my greatest happinesses while I live. But Mr. Dorrington—he never will consent to it. No, no—he is proud—very proud, I feel—he will never consent to it."

“ But if you accept it from me, dear Grace—if you make me so happy as you will do by thus giving me a proof that you know how truly I love you—how much you are to me, who have so few real friends, so few that I can truly, deeply and unreservedly love—how I think of you as a dear sister—and I have no other sister, you know—then, dear Grace,” said Mrs. Harrison, and the tears came into her eyes; and there was a mournful tone in her voice, which Grace so well understood, though few who knew the wealth, the standing, the many and brilliant acquaintances and so-called friends of this lovely woman, could have understood it, had they heard her talking of her few friends, “ then, dear Grace,” continued Hetty, “ if you tell Mr. Dorrington that, and how happy he will make me, I think he will not refuse you.”

Grace’s tears were now flowing fast; she embraced her young friend once more with deep emotion, and, wiping her tears away, said passionately :

“ No, dear Hetty, no—he cannot refuse. I now feel that he will not. He will feel and admire your noble soul. I will say all that I can—I will write at once—it will be done, I feel certain.”

Grace wrote that evening, and she did him right. Mr. Dorrington frankly accepted the offer. He added that he felt proud to accept it—to do such a heart as Mrs. Harrison's the justice of a generous confidence; though he could not have believed, the day before, that such devoted friendship yet existed, or that he could have been willing to receive such a favour from any one.

With the marriage-gift of Madam Van Orren and this liberal loan, the Dene was nearly freed from all other encumbrance. One single year, Mr. Dorrington declared, would discharge the remainder; and a very few years enable them to repay their friend, and know that the Dene was wholly and solely their own.

CHAPTER III.

WE open this chapter with a new portion of the life of Mrs. Dorrington. Our last chapter ought, according to the received rules of fiction, to have closed our story. We have married our heroine, and there we ought to have left her in all the supposed felicity of wedded life; but as our narrative happens to have in it more truth than fiction, the rule does not apply to us. We follow rules and canons of our own.

Madam Dorrington is only just now become Madam Dorrington of the Dene. We have yet to see some things which befell her there. We have to learn more of life than consists in the perils, labyrinths, and triumphs of courtship.

There are other dangers than those which beset the path of maiden beauty ; there are other joys than those of happy lovers, in the roseate days of passion and auspicious union ; there are other tears than those that fall in the adverse hours of a struggling attachment, or on the white veil of the departing bride.

In the morning of life, we may roam amongst sparkling dews, listen to the songs of birds, and be exposed to an occasional shower ; but it is towards noon-day that we feel a deeper and more solemn tone in the scenes around us. The dews are exhaled, the birds often cease to sing, and the awful voice of the thunder coming from the intense blackness of the shrouded sky, sinks with a profound feeling into the heart—awaking thoughts of God, of eternity, of things more sacred and sublime than are whispered to us in life's earlier tones. It is then that the passions and the interests come into play, or rather into intense action—for there is no play in it—which try the spirit, and rend from existence all its romantic drapery. Then stand forth, in their undisguised strength, and often in their most frightful deformity, the deep-rooted propensities of human nature. Will clashes with will, desire wrestles with desire, selfishness and the

thirst of command tug desperately at each ; and the characters, which once were alike in their monotonous smoothness, start forth, real, violent in their contrasts, often terrific in their force and their features—often doing deeds that thrill the recoiling spectator with terror and astonishment.

It seems to us that fiction mistakes its true field when it ceases where these impulses and influences begin. It is only in full manhood and womanhood that the full character is manifested. It is when two human beings are brought into the closest proximity that they often become sensible of a repellant moral electricity which drives them asunder, ah ! farther than the physical world can give them room for. How many who dream that they have met to part no more, are about to part to meet no more. How many unite hands only to sever irrevocably heart and soul ! How many love only to hate ! How many find the fancied gate of happiness the threshold of misery and despair ! Our daily observation startles us continually with the speedy development of crime and calamity after the most brilliant and imposing alliances ? Crime, astonishing, motiveless, staring forth from the most lovely and amiable-seeming

forms—calamity, terrible and tragic beyond the poet's imagining, bursting forth where every earthly element has seemed consenting to insure a pure and virtuous felicity ! One day we behold the beautiful maiden hanging on the arm of a gallant and manly lover ; another, the mother seated by the happy husband, and amid a troop of beautiful children ; again, another turn of the strange kaleidoscope of existence, and there is a fugitive, faithless, abandoned wife ; a mother fleeing along the burning path of maternal remorse—hopeless, loveless, and revolting,—the living wreck of infamy and despair ! Such may not be fiction, but it is life.

Ours is on the whole a happier history. But though we know Grace Delmey, we do not yet know Madam Dorrington. We have seen the young and gentle maiden, fair and affectionate—we have yet to see the woman developed in her strength, and tried in the searching circumstances of a retired, but not uneventful existence.

When Grace Dorrington arrived at the Dene there were many things in her lot calculated to make her a proud and happy woman. There was something delightful and inspiring in coming back to her native scenes, to which, spite of

some bitter drawbacks, she was passionately attached. It was in the middle of a beautiful May, and there seemed a peculiar happiness in the landscape and the very air that surrounded her. It was the happiness from within. Beautiful as that part of the country is, who does not know *how* beautiful is the scenery of your youth, when you return to it with a glad heart, and expecting the embraces of beloved friends. There is a Sabbath feeling in the earth. The cordial and familiar face of nature seems to smile a sunny welcome to you. The green fields, the solemn and ever-meditating trees, the song of the lark high in the blue air, the soft fleeting clouds, the gladsome sunshine, have all a sentiment of home and of heaven in them. You have been amongst coldness and storms, but none seem to have been there. You have been amongst trouble and death, but none seem to have been there. You have stood in astonishment amongst confounding and quailing proofs of the depravity of your race, and the hollowness of existence, but they do not seem to have had any entrance there. All looks serene, real, simple and primeval. You behold once more the paradise of your childhood—that delicious and enchanted world—not a leaf

withered—not a man dead—not a face grown older. Your heart glows with a divine rapture towards everything it approaches, and everything seems to say: “Welcome—welcome!” The old houses in their old fields, are, to your imagination, saying to their inhabitants: “There, we see our old friend once more.” The very peasant leans on his fork as you pass, and doffs his hat with a smile that seems to say: “I was waiting for you, and now I will have a holiday!”

Such are the first aspects, thoughts and feelings of such a happy time, ere further and closer and cooler view, makes visible the flaws, the failings, and the mortal vacancies beneath the veil of joy. So was it with Grace Dorrington as she drew near Westwood. Her husband sate quietly smiling at her side, watching the effect of the first peep of the woody ridge, and the old square grey church-tower of Westwood, as the carriage approached the brow of the hill on that opposite side of the valley, where our friend Mr. Bathurst first saw the same scene.

One moment she exclaimed: “Oh! there is the dear old place!” and at the next catching the white gleam of the Dene at the head of its dark glen: “Ay, and there—” “Is our *home*,”

added Mr. Dorrington, concluding her sentence. Grace's eyes were fixed with a deep, glad expression on the spot. "It is really a noble—a beautiful place!" she added, with a tone of mixed gladness and thoughtfulness: "May God bless us there many years!"

"Amen!" said the quiet manly voice of her husband.

And let no one suppose that Mr. Dorrington was a choice so very erroneous for Grace Delmey. Though time showed that the foundations of two very different characters lay in those two bosoms—such difference was then little discernible. The bride was fair and gentle; the bridegroom was manly, handsome, and gentlemanly. She was full of impulse, but circumstances had not yet shown that trials could create in her a divine patience that did not seem a part of her nature, without dimming that glow of humanity which was visible in every feature and glance. He was more staid and calculating, but at the same time there was a buoyant life and life's enjoyment about him—a sort of frank manliness, a fondness even for joke and humour, that marked a man accustomed to society, and yet little troubled with care, or touched with the distrusts born of experience. What belonged to

the temperament of youth, fell away with time ; and different qualities, then not so much hidden, as not called forth, came gradually and finally into view. What these were, the progress of our story will show ; but thus much we may say, that with certain conventionalisms, and strong prejudices, Mr. Dorrington was a man of the most stoical integrity in principle ; and though his nature did not permit him as life progressed to sympathise with many of his wife's feelings, he was ever strongly attached to her, and honoured her as she deserved.

The carriage now rapidly traversed the valley between them and Westwood, and about a mile ere they reached the village, they met Grace's elder brother, Hinchliffe Delmey, on horseback, who had come out to be the first to welcome them home. Grace was struck with the gay and handsome appearance of this brother, mounted on his fine horse, and with his rich chestnut hair hanging, in the fashion of the time, in sunny masses upon his shoulders. After warmly shaking hands with them both, and saluting his sister, he galloped back to announce their approach. The news was soon proved to have reached Westwood, by the bursting forth of the church bells—those old bells

whose sound had been music to Grace since her childhood. As they came in sight, ascending the lane, and before turning up the old chestnut avenue, they found a great number of the villagers assembled, who received them with loud hurrahs and waving hats ; and a thousand bows, courtesies, and shouted good wishes. The lodge gates were standing wide open, and the lodge-keeper and his wife, clad in their Sunday garbs, standing at their door, made their respectful salutations. At the door of the Dene stood another group, amongst whom could be seen Grace's father, her two brothers, Jeremiah Gould, and the broad, honest, smiling face of Ben Greatorex. In the background another crowd of the old villagers set up a great shout ; and in another moment, Grace, springing from the carriage, found herself in the arms of her father, both of them trembling with delight and emotion. There was, as may be supposed, a wondrous embracing, shaking of hands, and utterance of congratulations, not only from those we have mentioned, but from sundry of Mr. Dorrington's friends from the town ; and in the next moment, the whole throng swept into the Dene, and Grace found herself seated in the great shady room, called the library, the mistress of this sweet

old place ; and now really Madam Dorrington, of the Dene. She saw the sun shining warmly over the delightful garden, saw around her a crowd of happy faces, heard a confused murmur of lively voices ; but the things which she most distinctly saw were her father sitting by her, holding her hand, and saying : “ God bless thee, Grace ! God bless thee, my child ! ” ’ Jeremiah Gould smiling quietly opposite her, and Farmer Greatorex, with his large eyes and large rosy face beaming upon her, and the moment she nodded a second recognition to him, heard him burst out : “ Drat it, Miss Delmey—Madam Dorrington, I mean—why Westwood’s Westwood again, now you’re come back. This day’s an actual *hero* in history, as our friend the Vicar here says. And, hang me, if you arn’t handsomer than ever. All th’ women here mun hide their *unfinished* heads now, and that I shall tell ’em. But, drat me, that reminds me I mun go, and tell Nancy and th’ children.” And up jumped the jolly farmer to go, but Mr. Dorrington cried :

“ No, Greatorex, you must stop to dine first ! ”

“ Dine ! ” said Greatorex, just turning round at the door, “ God bless you ! I have dined these three hours.”—it was about four o’clock—“ but

I shall bring my wife down to drink a glass of wine, and long life and prosperity to you ;” and with that his large figure disappeared through the door.

We need not follow the incidents and joyous felicitations of that happy day, the sun shining, the bells ringing, as the gay party sate at dinner, or rambled out through the gardens before tea, every step being to Grace an advance into a *terra incognita* of beauty and delight. That fine, descending lawn, that sunny water, those noble trees, the wooded hills around, the shady orchard, the valley of the Dene with its sloping fields all full of grass and flowers, and shut in to their own seclusion—all was to her the realization of a beautiful dream. It was a spot beyond her warmest imaginings, in which she promised herself much delight, nor was the promise vain. And through all she leaned with one arm on the husband of her youth, and with the other on that beloved father to whom she was almost all that made life desirable.

At first Grace was delighted to see her father looking so well. There was a freshness in his aspect, an enjoyment in his language and his manners, that greatly consoled and satisfied her. She had imagined him careworn and bowed

with years, not so numerous as heavy. She rejoiced to believe that she had exaggerated the reality of his suffering by her too sensitive apprehensions. She was glad to see her brothers amongst the first and the warmest to welcome her to her new home. There was a common and somewhat shy look about Anthony that disappointed her ; but in Hinchliffe she saw a fine, handsome young man, who with his rich hair, his fair complexion, and blue sunny eyes, was the very impersonation of youthful gaiety and comeliness. On all sides she heard the praises of his good looks and good-nature. He appeared a universal favourite. Farmer Greatorrex said he was another Absalom, that took all hearts by his pleasant manners and by his flowing hair. Nor was the idea a bad one. He had the same handsome person, the same luxuriant locks, the same popular and engaging address. Even Jeremiah Gould praised his goodness of heart, though he wished he were a little steadier.

Grace did not find her mother amongst those who hailed her return to them.. She scarcely expected it, and yet she was hurt by the omission. Her mother had never written to her, never sent any message, never expressed pleasure or displeasure, at least to her, on the news

of her proposed marriage to Mr. Dorrington. Grace resolved, however, to do her duty to her, and, therefore, the very next day walked down to Fulbourne to see her. What singular feelings were hers as she once more approached that old familiar spot. In all outward appearance it was precisely the same as she had ever known it. The old brick house, with its pointed gables, backed by the great wood, and with the odorous garden lying all round it in front. The bees working at their old row of hives; the very smell of the tall box bordering; the loose river gravel of the walks; the little gate leading over the grass-carpetted moat, and the well-known flowers blooming on in the very same places. In the park-like meadow in front, there were, as usual, flocks of young turkeys, geese, and guinea-fowls wandering about; the peacocks were crying from the chestnut-trees in the farm-yard, and foals were basking on the warm sward, or galloping round their mothers. There was a sunny quiet, a fresh abundance of flowery grass and leafy trees, that fell with a deeper charm on the heart of Grace after the crowds and brick wilderness of London. But as she lifted the latch of the little garden-gate, her heart beat anxiously at

the thought of what would be her reception by her mother. Her natural affection made her yearn for natural kindness, and the natural union between parent and child.

She knocked at the front door, lest she should seem to enter abruptly her own natal home, but no one appearing she went in. There was no one in the sitting-room, no one in the parlour. How the memory of her last evening there flashed across her as she looked into that room. Her heart beat anxiously, painfully. She went on, there was no one in the kitchen, not even a servant, though preparation for cheese-making was apparent: the large brass pan standing covered with a cloth, and bridge and pail ready to proceed to separate curd and whey. Finding no one in, Grace walked into the court-yard. A huge mastiff there made a desperate rush from his kennel, rattling his chain over the wooden sill of his den, and with a furious yelling startled her, and caused her to stand. At the same instant, she heard the well-known bold tones of her mother's voice, saying:

" Silence, Sampson ! who comes there, boy ?" and turning, Grace saw her mother in

one corner of the yard with a basin in her hand, feeding a flock of young chickens.

The tall, stern-looking woman did not move from her place, or cease her employment. She seemed to wait for the stranger to approach her, though she probably guessed who the stranger was. Grace, with trembling knees, advanced towards her, and said gently : " Dear mother, how are you ? "

Mrs. Delmey stood erect, and severely grave. She still held the basin of soaked bread in her left hand, and looked for a considerable time at Grace without speaking.

" Don't you know me, mother ? " said Grace drawing nearer, and offering her hand, which the strange, stern mother, made a motion to put back, but without touching it.

" Mother ! do you call me ? " said she, harshly ; and surveying her daughter with a cold and haughty look. " Can so fine a lady be a daughter of mine ? Nay, don't put out that dainty hand towards me ; see, mine is not fit to touch such delicate fingers," showing her hand thickly encrusted with the wet chicken's meat.

" Oh, what matters that ? " said Grace, her

eyes filling with tears. "Mother! let us shake hands, let us unite hearts, as nature intended. What have I done to displease you? Do not be unkind to me, on an occasion like this, and when my father and my brothers have been so kind! What shall I do to please you, dear mother?"

"Do! As you did before—take yourself away. Did I ever send for you? Stay with those who did send after you, and to whom you belong. Go, cockatrice! you cannot deceive me; the very dog knew you for an enemy. He would tear those dainty garments, and those delicate limbs into shreds, if he could come at you. You cannot deceive him—nor me. Do you ask me what you have done? Whose wife are you? To whom have you allied yourself? To the enemy of me and mine! To the very man who has been employed to interfere between man and wife, between father and son. To him who has been singled out as of all men most fitting to act the spy, the inquisitor, the turnkey, to lock up my own property from me, my sons' property from them. To insult my brother, and take the management of my affairs out of his hands. For what? For whom? Proud

minx! do you think I do not know? Do you think I am a fool, an idiot? I know for what, and for whom! It is to secure all for himself, and for you. I knew it; and you ask me—what you have done? Oh! I know your false heart, your meek and saintly hypocrisy.”

“Mother! mother!” exclaimed Grace, trembling violently, “you do me gross injustice—you do my husband great injustice! He cannot, he would not do a base thing. Why should he?”

“Why should he? Ha! ha! Why should he?” said the fearful woman with one of her most sarcastic looks. “Ask him, ask anybody that! Does not the monkey sit on every chimney of that Dene of his?* Oh, it will be very convenient to pay off the mortgage at Westwood with the plunder of Fulbourne. Away, woman! you make me mad!”

At this moment Francis Delmey rushed into the yard pale with terror and anger, exclaiming, “Wife! wife! what are you doing? Are you a fiend—a tiger? Is this not your own flesh and blood?”

“And yours!” said the terrible woman, with a look that spoke a hate and a meaning that

* A provincial taunt for a mortgage.

were frightful, though she herself stood tall, still, and outwardly cold.

Staggering as from a deadly blow, Grace escaped into the house and sunk into a chair. Her father rushed in after her, and exclaimed: "Oh, my Grace! she has killed thee—she will kill us all. Would to God we were safe in heaven!"

"Water," said Grace, "I feel faint;" and the distracted father flew for water. Grace drank, sate for a few moments with closed eyes, the eye-lids trembling convulsively, her lips compressed and white as marble, and her whole system struggling against the overwhelming misery. On opening her eyes with a deep sigh, she raised herself, and said in a faint voice: "Help me, dear father—let us go."

Francis Delmey pale, trembling and silent, clasping his daughter, supported her from the house; and without a word they proceeded to the garden at the other end of the meadow, Grace indicating by a sign that thither she wished to go. In this garden, enclosed in its tall holly-hedges, in which, as a child, she had so often assisted her father in his labours, in that old thick arbour, where so often she had

sate to hear him read, Grace sank upon the seat, and shed a torrent of relieving tears ; her father all the time holding her hand, looking alternately at her, and towards heaven, and saying mournfully : “ My child ! my dear child, what a reception ! Oh, thou good, and all-merciful God, would it were Thy will to take us to Thy world of rest ! ”

At length, Grace recovering a degree of equanimity, and making an effort at that self-command which during the remainder of her life she had so much need of, and which she practised so successfully, said : “ Dearest father, I now see that it is not well for me to come here. I now see the working of things that I had not sufficiently reflected on. Your employment of Mr. Dorrington has exasperated my mother’s mind. It was quite right that what you did should be done ; but it is unfortunate that Mr. Dorrington happened to be the man.”

“ But how could I see that ? ” said her father, mournfully.

“ Not at all, dear father, but as it has happened, I can very well see how my mother’s violent feelings would and have been excited. She has taken a view of affairs very natural to

her—she cannot help it. We must have patience, and try in time to disabuse her of her erroneous idea.”

Francis Delmey shook his head.

“But we cannot tell, father. At all events, we must take care not to strengthen her prejudices; and we must pray to be enabled to diminish them.”

“God in heaven bless thee, my dear child!” said Francis Delmey, tears streaming down his cheeks, and dropping upon his trembling hands. “God be praised that He has given thee such a sweet, Christian spirit. Ah! my dear Grace, what a treasure art thou to me, and yet to be thus received by thy own mother, in thy own native home.”

“Never mind that, dear father,” said Grace, rising to her feet, and kissing her father’s forehead, “don’t think of that. Let us do what we can with the help of God; and think, dear father, are we not going to be always together?” And she smiled in her father’s face with an expression so beautiful, that the old man’s mind, which appeared driven to the verge of insanity; seemed to see her as in a vision, rather than to catch the comfort of her words.

“An angel! a perfect angel!” he said,

looking upwards, “and yet to have been so received.”

Grace, alarmed, took his arm briskly, saying : “Come, father, come ! we must go home. Mr. Dorrington is gone to town ; you must come and dine with me. I want to have a deal of talk with you. You must tell me all about our neighbours and the country round.”

“I will,” said the old man, absently, “I will,” and Grace put her arm within his, continued to talk cheerfully to him, and ask of this and that in the neighbourhood ; and thus they ascended to Westwood ; and this was the first visit of Mrs. Dorrington to her native home—more painful still than her former flight from it.

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. DORRINGTON, after the first excitement of their meeting had gone off, and especially after her painful visit to Fulbourne, perceived the effect which time and trouble had produced in her father. That freshness of look which had so much pleased her was gone—it was but the warm glow of pleasure which her coming had thrown over his features, like sunset ruddiness on an autumn landscape. She now, more and more, as she gazed on him, perceived the haggard brow of care—the hair thinned and whitened—the deep lines ploughed into the pale and melancholy face, and the sunken eye, which when not fixed on her in

unutterable affection, was cold, downward-gazing, and wretched. There was a restlessness in his manner, a nervous inability to settle in one place. He had contracted a habit during her absence of wandering from his home to Andrew Harrison's, thence to Jeremiah Gould's, and thence to Farmer Greatorex's. He seemed to have lost the deep and absorbing interest in his books, and after relating the annoyances which his wife and sons had occasioned him, the condition to which they had reduced his affairs, the slights and insults to which he had been subjected, there was a wandering of thought, and a dreamy expression of the eye, which extremely alarmed Mrs. Dorrington, as if she saw in them the commencement of insanity or fatuity. She was filled with horror at the idea. There was, she knew, a relative of her father's family who had for years, under the care of a constant keeper, led a life of the most pitiable childishness. She had seen him often in her youth, and she seemed to see her father driven by his griefs to the same melancholy condition.

It was only now that she learned from him, in their uninterrupted opportunities at the Dene, the whole extent of what he had had to

undergo. Mr. Dorrington daily rode to town to business, and did not return till seven to dine. Sometimes the pressure of business kept him all night, and even for two or three days together ; but Grace knew the occasion of these detentions, she knew that in a lawyer's practice they must occur, and she did not vex herself about them. So thoroughly did she sympathize with Mr. Dorrington's honourable desire to work out his patrimonial estate, and to repay their friend, Mrs. Harrison, her generous loan, that she voluntarily proposed in the winter to go and stay in town for weeks or months at Mr. Dorrington's lodgings, as the weather and circumstances might happen to make his daily rides inconvenient.

During the day, therefore, she had her father with her as much as possible. She engaged him to assist her in her plans for the improvement of the garden and grounds. Together they planned the Nest, various walks amongst the shrubberies, and down the valley through the fields. They planned, and with Mr. Dorrington's approval, made walks into the woods on the left-hand side of the house, and cleared the ground once more from about a handsome brick summer-house in the centre of them, on a

height overlooking almost the whole country round. This had been grievously neglected, and the whole opening around it overgrown by brambles and rampant plants. The summer-house itself, which was an hexagonal building, with tall handsome windows, and a dome roof covered with lead, and surmounted by a fane, had a balcony round its upper story, whence on the one hand you could see the village, with its tall grey church—below the village the old house of Fulbourne in its valley, and far over it the blue ridges of the Derbyshire hills. South and east lay an immense cultivated valley and cultivated uplands, and westward the eye ranged over the woods of Arden, the old mansion being invisible amongst its lofty trees.

This was a delightful place of resort in summer. The summer-house stood on a sort of lofty little table-land, surrounded by old scattered beeches and pines, and the woods which sloped down to the gardens and valley of the Dene were chiefly of dark firs. As they sloped from the west, they lay early in the afternoon in shadow, and thence partly, and partly from their being of fir, were called Coolside. The former inhabitants seemed to have almost wholly neglected these woods, and this sweet sylvan sum-

mer-house; and not only were its walks grown up, and the handsome steps by which you ascended to it become overgrown with moss and tufts of grass, but the frescoes of rural scenes, haymakings, and hunts, and the like, were mildewed, and for the most part defaced. You could see here and there the horns or the leg of a stag, the projected head of an eager hound, or the arm and spear of a huntsman, and on another side the fragmentary remains of shepherdesses and haymakers. A rake-head was visible aloft amongst green stains and creeping hundred-legs, and below might be pondered out a piece of a brook, and the naked foot of a bathing nymph. But for the greater part, the plaster had forsaken the walls, and the ceiling hung in threatening masses from the exposed laths.

To restore this charming place was one of Grace Dorrington's most zealous objects. She had the gardener and his assistants at work, clearing the walks, and binding up the faggots from the brushwood. Workmen were busy restoring the building, both externally and internally, and Mr. Dorrington had consented to her having a painter from town, during the summer, to replace the frescoes by some new designs.

Moses Plant the gardener, was a grave and clever man of his class, of about thirty, who had received that singular name from the old gardener, now deceased, when he had the lad from the Foundling Hospital. Moses was now himself head gardener, and conceived a wonderful respect for Mrs. Dorrington, from her intense love of a garden, and of everything belonging to the country. He entered into all her plans with enthusiasm, and not less so a remarkable looking young man of the name of Dan Hardy, a labourer employed about the farm-yard and grounds, and, when required, in the rough work of the gardens and shrubberies.

This young fellow at once attracted Mrs. Dorrington's attention. He was a tall, well-built man of not less than six feet two. There was a wonderful activity about him. He had a long stride, and free action, that spoke of a vigorous constitution, and an ardent temperament. His face was somewhat long, with a bold straight nose, light blue eyes that were quick in their glances as lightning, and gleamed with fun and humour like water laughing in a noon sun. He wore his dark-brown hair long as an ancient German, hanging in thick masses about his shoulders; and seemed to devour his work as a

ungry man devours his food. He was a noted boxer, runner and performer of exploits of strength and activity that not a man for miles round the country could come near. He had evidently an extraordinary relish for life. It was a wonder to see him work and talk at the same time, when he was only amongst his fellows. He seemed equally to glory in performing prodigies of activity, and in vaunting and bragging in his talk of such things; but his vaunts were no empty vaunts, they were only the overflowing of life and life's fire in him. He loved nothing better than some dangerous undertaking, and had occasions for showing his courage and Goliath-like strength which we shall have hereafter to notice.

For Mrs. Dorrington he was ready to fly like another Mercury, through air or water, or like another Hercules to lift and carry the most prodigious loads. Trees fell before him like sticks, bushes were swept before him like grass, and the ground was turned up with the spade with a rapidity that was miraculous. To her lectures on some parts of his conduct, his racings, boxings, and the like doings, he listened in the most good-natured manner; said it was all very true, and

he would try to do his best ; but that he could not help a good deal of fool-hardiness—he said it was in his blood.

With such efficient workmen, Mrs. Dorrington's improvements went on rapidly. The Dene gradually assumed a brighter and more charming air ; and while going about to plan and observe the progress of those changes, Grace had her father generally for her companion, and listened to his story of what had occurred since she went away.

It was a melancholy narrative. His having sent Grace away brought down upon him the fiercest indignation of his wife. It might have been thought that she would have been glad of her absence, but then she had disappointed her intention of marrying her to the fellow Shell-cross ; and there was a feeling in Mrs. Delmey's mind, something we imagine like what there must be in the breast of a tiger, when its prey has escaped it. But when Francis Delmey began firmly to enter upon a reform of his affairs, when it came to light that he had actually engaged Darwin and Dorrington to inquire into them, and to take them into their hands, then a storm broke loose, which it will be easier to imagine than describe. Every species

of taunt, sarcasm, threat and malice was exhausted on the unhappy man.

Mrs. Delmey roused her sons in opposition by every possible suggestion and assertion. She represented that their unnatural father, who had never had any true paternal affection for them, whose heart could only expand to the soft, sentimental, milk-and-water spirit of his daughter, having now sent her away, was preparing to settle everything upon her. He would, she represented, probably sell the place from under them, and go away after Grace, leaving them beggars. She represented Mr. Dorrington as a needy person, who would be glad to make a bill out of the old doting man, and borrow the proceeds of the sale on security of his own deeply indebted property. She protested to Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe against his giving way in the slightest degree to Darwin and Dorrington; to his giving them any account of the state of the property. And truly that gentleman availed himself of the subtleties of his profession to an extraordinary extent, in baffling and fighting off the advances and demands of Darwin and Dorrington.

He pleaded his positive orders from the family; did not even scruple to insinuate, mysteriously, doubts of the full sanity or ability of

Mr. Francis Delmey to manage his own affairs menaced Chancery; more than hinted at even a writ *de lunatico inquirendo*. But the tact, temper and high standing of the firm he had to deal with at length compelled him to give way; but giving way, was only to shift his ground, not to surrender it. He assumed a demeanour of the greatest candour, the most gracious affability, the profoundest deference for the talent and respectability of his opponents; he lamented that there should be a danger of the family being driven to desperate measures; observed, that he need not instruct them as to the dauntless and determined spirit of his sister, Mrs. Delmey, and deprecated the hazard of all being swallowed up in litigation.

The imperturbable temper and lofty firmness of Darwin and Dorrington triumphed over the wily and Protean attorney. There was a point beyond which, without loss of professional character, he could not go. He knew that he had no case, or rather a very bad one. He knew that the deed, and the only deed in his possession, and on which he had advanced a large sum, had been obtained by means that would not bear very close inquiry; and he felt that a little too much obstinacy might endanger

his own advances. He became anxious to treat, while he could safely, for an acknowledged security of his claims ; he therefore consented to a conditional surrender—and the day was won.

But this *dénouement* turned the tempest of the fury of Mrs. Delmey and her sons full upon Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe himself. There was no stint in the imprecations and insults which both mother and sons heaped upon him. He saw no very clear prospect of further advantage from them, now the property was wrested from their hands ; and therefore he made a point of resenting his treatment, and drawing, in dignified injury of feelings, back from further intercourse with them.

But though Mr. Delmey was thus put into possession of his right, his wife and sons remained in possession of his house and property. There he dared not to show himself. For a whole summer he took up his residence at Andrew Harrison's, but not even thus escaping casual encounters, and agitating, humiliating scenes, with Mrs. Delmey or his sons, in his way from Lerk to Westwood.

His solicitors could have compelled a surrender of the house and land to their client,

but with such a woman as Mrs. Delmey it was not to be thought of; the scandal, and even the danger, would have been too great. Sooner than be forced legally from her castle, she would have probably burnt it to the ground, or have attacked the lives of any officers attempting to take possession. Mr. Delmey, therefore, contented himself with receiving, for the present, from his friend Andrew Harrison, the interest of a sum he had luckily invested in Andrew's concerns, and congratulated himself that he had at least withdrawn from his family the power to take up money on the estate at will.

For a time, there was a fiery feud amongst the different parties, which rang through the whole neighbourhood, and excited the whole mind, and engrossed the whole attention of the place, as such things only can in the country. The sons of Francis Delmey vowed vengeance on Mr. Dorrington, who had been the great actor in the movements carried on by his firm; and Mr. Hinchliffe Delmey meeting Mr. Dorrington on horseback near the county-town, rode up to him in his impetuous and unhesitating manner, and demanded an explanation of his conduct.

Mr. Dorrington, with admirable coolness, replied, that his conduct was simply professional, and he hoped perfectly honourable.

Mr. Hinchliffe avowed his doubt as to both these assertions. He had his reasons, he affirmed, for believing that there was more than professional motive in the matter. He denied that the proceedings were honourable.

Mr. Dorrington smiled.

Mr. Hinchliffe Delmey raised his riding-whip, demanding what he meant.

Mr. Dorrington raised a stout crab stick, and replied, he meant simply to defend himself.

“Do you mock me?” exclaimed Mr. Hinchliffe Delmey, reddening. “I demand satisfaction, Sir, for this and a thousand other insults!”

“That is precisely what I am anxious to give you, Mr. Delmey,” replied Mr. Dorrington, with a wonderful coolness, yet with an air of sincerity that arrested the attention of the angry young man; “but as the party challenged, of course, I choose my own weapons; and we lawyers prefer the weapons of reason and conviction to those of brute violence. Come along with me to our office, Mr. Delmey, and I will give you all the satisfaction in my power—more perhaps than you ask for,—certainly

more true satisfaction than such as your resentment, it seems, would lead you to. I fear not pistols, Mr. Delmey; I fear still less, what, if I be not honourable, is much more dangerous—the most searching inquiry.”

Hinchliffe Delmey paused for a moment—there was an air of such open frankness, such unquestionable courage about Mr. Dorrington, that he sate as if asking himself whether he should comply with his desire; but suddenly quitting his thoughtful mood, he said, haughtily:

“No, Sir, I will *not* go to your office. I know you lawyers. You make no doubt that once in your den, you can mystify me with your legal sophistries. No, Sir! I am quite satisfied that you have done all the injury to myself and my family that you can, and I will be avenged.”

“I am quite sure,” said Mr. Dorrington, “that you do think and believe as you say. It is quite natural. You have only heard Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe’s story. I repeat my proposal—act like a sensible man, Mr. Hinchliffe—you do not look like a bad or a weak one; see what has really taken place, and then if you are not satisfied, I shall be greatly surprised.”

“Yes, I know very well,” added Mr. Hinchliffe Delmey, somewhat scornfully, “that you

trust to your cunning to bamboozle me. But you won't fight?"

"We shall see that," replied Mr. Dorrington, gravely, "after you have carefully examined the real facts of the case."

Mr. Dorrington added, that he was riding against time to keep an appointment, and if Mr. Delmey had anything further to say, perhaps he would ride a little way along with him.

"No, Sir!" said Mr. Delmey again haughtily. "But, stop! May I bring a friend?"

"Certainly."

"A lawyer?"

"Oh, certainly!"

"Then I *will* call on you to-day, at three o'clock."

"I shall be very glad to see you," added Mr. Dorrington, and rode away.

At the hour appointed Mr. Delmey, and his friend appeared at the office of Darwin and Dorrington. Mr. Dorrington had all his papers in readiness. The lawyer whom Mr. Hinchliffe Delmey had brought with him was a young gentleman of a distinguished firm, with which Darwin and Dorrington had had a sharp contest not long before. Mr. Dorrington felt the

motive of the selection, but he expressed his perfect readiness to explain anything that he could. And in the first place, he stated that Mr. Francis Delmey had solicited their aid to ascertain certain facts respecting his property, the data of which were in Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe's hands."

"Oh," said Mr. Delmey to his legal friend, "understand that properly. My uncle Coxe told me that my father did not seek aid from this firm; that they got hold of him, and—"

"Pray do not interrupt me, Mr. Delmey," said Mr. Dorrington. "Your friend will see whether what I state is correct, and you will have every opportunity of correcting my statements when made. But first, I will place the deed on which Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe advanced certain sums, the account of those sums, and Mr. Coxe Hinchliff's bill of charges, before your legal friend."

Mr. Dorrington did so. The lawyer carefully went over them, manifesting even through his practised features some considerable surprise as as he proceeded, till at length he asked:

"Did Mr. Francis Delmey himself deposit this deed? Did he receive these sums? and did he see this account in its progress?"

"I must answer all your queries," replied Mr. Dorrington, "in the negative."

"I thought as much," responded the lawyer.

"But you are quite wrong," exclaimed Mr. Hinchliffe Delmey, "I am quite sure that my father did deposit this deed with my uncle."

"Who tells you so? But no," added Mr. Dorrington, "I would rather not ask you that. See here."

And he drew a letter from the carefully folded and filed papers. "That is Mrs. Delmey's own letter to her brother, explaining the circumstance."

The lawyer read the letter, and handed it in silence to Mr. Hinchliffe Delmey, saying, as he did so:

"I am quite satisfied, Mr. Dorrington; this is a business which, for all parties, had much better not pass beyond the pale of the family."

By this time Mr. Hinchliffe Delmey had read the letter, and stood with it in his hand, silent with astonishment.

"How *could* my mother deceive me so?" he muttered as to himself. "Mr. Dorrington, I have seen enough: I have seen quite enough; I ask your excuse from my heart for the foolish suspicions I have expressed."

“Don’t mention it,” said Mr. Dorrington ; “but I should like you to see your uncle’s bill of charges, because you will then find sufficient cause for whatever may have appeared harsh or peremptory in our conduct.”

“I will explain all that to Mr. Delmey,” said his legal friend ; “and allow me to say, Mr. Dorrington, that I return from this office with much higher respect for you as a man and a lawyer than I entered it.”

“I appreciate the assurance,” said Mr. Dorrington, “fully.”

They then cordially shook hands, and Mr. Delmey and his friend withdrew.

From that day, there was a great and marked change in Hinchliffe Delmey. He knew his mother’s violent character ; he had not till then known the extent of her duplicity or folly. He had resented her collusion with Shellcross for the forced marriage of his sister when he learned it, and had broken with Shellcross on that account ; and from that day to this the breach had gone on widening between that man of the turf and himself. He attributed that affair to the vulgar impudence of Shellcross and the bad taste of his mother. But now he saw so much want of truth in her proceedings in this

affair, and so much of selfishness in the part his uncle had acted in it, that it caused him to think deeply. His good natural sense showed him how much his mother's violence and extravagance had been injuring his own patrimony, and what real cause his father had had to act with the decision that he had done ; so that many scales of folly fell from his eyes, and he felt a sense of genuine youthful remorse for his conduct towards his father.

Hinchliffe was naturally of an open and generous, though passionate, temperament. There was a world of good in him, but it had been choked by bad counsels, or misguided by bad example and hurtful companions. But his nature was frank, fearless and warm. Once knowing the truth, he did not hesitate to dissent from the tirades of his mother and brother against his father, and against Mr. Dorrington on the very next occasion of hearing them. He told them candidly what had occurred, and that he was quite convinced that they were wrong.

" Fool !" exclaimed his mother. " Poor dupe !" muttered his brother Anthony ; but they did not move him. He accosted his father the very next time that he saw him, being, in fact, on the way to seek him, with

a kindness and respect which greatly astonished the old man, and brought the tears into his eyes.

“Ah! Hinchliffe, my dear boy,” said Francis Delmey; “if thou wert but always so. Gracious God! why can it not be?” And the old man trembled with emotion.

“Forgive me, dear father,” said Hinchliffe; “I have been very wrong, we have been all very wrong; but it shall be so no longer, at least not with me.”

Francis Delmey gazed on his son in astonishment. A violent tremor shook his whole frame: he lifted his hands toward heaven, and said, as if in prayer:

“Sayest thou so, my son? Do I hear aright? Wilt thou in truth be kind to me? Wilt thou love me? O, God! this is too much—too good—too beautiful!”

The old man uttered the last words half inaudibly; put his hand to his brow as if bewildered, staggered, and fell into the arms of his son. Hinchliffe laid him gently on the grassy ground where they were, knelt over him, and gazed on his pallid face and white hair as he lay insensible. The tears rushed in torrents from his eyes—from his heart—and he said, passionately and plaintively:

“Poor old man! we have nearly broken your heart, nearly destroyed your brain; and yet you were good, and noble, and had finer thoughts than we had. How has it been? What has bewitched us? But we will make amends. Amends! alas! is it not too late? Have we not worn out this tender nature—shattered this sensitive mind and frame by our folly and unkindness? God! canst Thou forgive us? What can we do?”

Hinchliffe ran to a neighbouring brook, and took up water in his hat to sprinkle his father's face with. When he came hurrying back his father had raised himself, was standing leaning by a tree, and on seeing Hinchliffe, hastened forward and clasped him in his arms, saying:

“Ah, Hinchliffe! ah! my dear lad! I feared it was a dream; but it's all right! all right! and thou wilt always be a son to me?”

“Always—always, father; so help me God!”

“Then I shall know good yet. Oh! how will Grace rejoice to hear this. We must let her know, Hinchliffe—we must; but I am so weak. How is it?”

“Be calm, dear father,” said Hinchliffe, giving him his arm to Andrew Harrison's, for

they were near his house ; “ go and rest yourself. I will see you again to-morrow.”

“ Wilt thou leave me so soon, my son ?” said the old man. “ Thou wilt really come to-morrow, Hinchliffe ?”

“ As sure as God’s in heaven !” said the gay, handsome young man, surprised at his own emotion, and hurrying away to conceal it.

From that time, Francis Delmey found a son in Hinchliffe. He went almost daily to Andrew Harrison’s to see him ; but he did not advise him to leave that quiet retreat, and come home. He felt that it could be no home to him. Mrs. Delmey and Anthony continued as hard and hostile to Francis Delmey as ever. They heaped contempt and reproaches on Hinchliffe, for what they called his weak folly ; but he did not care for it. Gay, and full of the enjoyment of life as ever, he rode, shot, hunted, and visited the county-town, where his handsome person and attractive manners had made him many friends ; but he continued to show his father every affection and respect, and to consult his comfort in every possible way. And who cannot conceive what a solace that was to Francis Delmey ?

Anthony, on the contrary, adhered to his mother. Shy and reserved before people of

education or standing, he sought his society amongst the lower class of the villagers. He was accustomed to have a troop of these fellows at his heels, shooting, fishing, and haunting the rural public-houses in their rounds. Mrs. Delmey, though passionately proud and fond of the handsome and gay Hinchliffe, was yet more indulgent even to the homely, and by no means dutiful or respectful Anthony. She straitened herself to supply his wants, and they were continual; for his tail of raggamuffins could not be treated from day to day in their rounds for nothing. She said Hinchliffe was a fine fellow, the pride of the country; but Anthony was rough and ready, and his mother's own son, and she could have sacrificed herself for him, though he never showed any particular gratitude. Anthony still kept up his acquaintance with Shellcross and his grooms, and Shellcross still resorted to Fulbourne, but as much as possible when Hinchliffe was away, who had grown to loathe him excessively, and took no pains to conceal his aversion.

CHAPTER V.

SUCH was the position of affairs at the time of Mrs. Dorrington's marriage. The altered feeling and conduct of Hinchliffe to their father, had given her the most profound satisfaction. She was, as we have already stated, greatly struck with the handsome person, and fascinating address of her brother, and proud of the regard in which she found him held wherever he appeared. He had, since the explanation with Mr. Dorrington, continued to cultivate his acquaintance, and especially since he became aware of the close alliance likely to take place between Mr. Dorrington and his family. We have seen that Hinchliffe was the first to meet and congratulate the new-married pair on their arrival; and he continued to visit his sister, and

to delight her by his lively, gay, open-hearted behaviour and conversation. Anthony also came occasionally to the Dene, but it was rather because it extended his range of shooting and fishing. He was always ready to supply the table with game in season ; and through the whole summer, he might be found trolling in the old ponds down the valley for pike, or fly-fishing in the Wilder for trout. In company, at the Dene, he was silent ; and if the conversation took an intellectual turn he soon stole away unperceived, and sought out Dan Hardy, or some of the other people on the estate, to talk of dogs, horses, game, fish, otters, and the like interesting topics.

More than twelve months had now rolled over since the marriage of Grace. Her abode at the Dene had been, on the whole, like a portion of heaven ; one of those sunny, fragrant, and delicious fragments of youthful life, not without clouds, which lie on the summer bosom of existence, as if they were to remain for ever. She had, through all the summer and autumn months been actively engaged in her improvements in the garden, shrubberies, and woods. The Nest had risen beneath its ancient and majestic limes, and had seen many a group of

happy friends assembled in it to tea during the evenings of the hot weather. All the flower-borders had been brought into admirable order, and there had been many consultations with Moses Plant, on the new flowers and annuals that must be procured for another season. In early summer mornings, when the dews were lying in sparkling abundance, and a thousand notes of birds were filling the odorous air—in the still noon, when only the bees and butterflies were in motion; at late evening, as the shadows were falling, and the jasmine and syringa breathed their perfumes through the soft twilight, Grace Dorrington was at work or enjoying herself in the garden, or adjoining grounds. Sometimes her brother Hinchliffe, full of life, good-humour, and playfulness, was with her, helping and planning, or engaged in some piece of sly mischief; in the evenings, Mr. Dorrington was there, seeming doubly to enjoy the freshness and beauty of the place after his day's town occupation. Grace had all her plans and proposals to show him, and to get his ideas for others, which it was a delight to her to carry out, and witness his satisfaction in.

But for the greater part of the time her father was her companion. She had had a

nice chamber overlooking the garden fitted up for him, with the snug dressing-room serving for a study. Here he had his favourite books. Here he could retire at his pleasure, and as long as he chose. Here he always had fresh flowering plants in his window, and everything necessary for his comfort. In Grace's gardening and woodland occupations he delighted to be her helper. To plant and prune, and tie up roses and other shrubs, dripping with dew and fragrance, carry pots of flowers to and from the green-house, and arrange them where they gave the best effect. To visit with her the workmen and the poultry yard. But still more, as Grace took her needle or her knitting, to sit and read to her in the Nest, or under the great barberry-tree, in the bees' nook, was Francis Delmey's delight. Or for hours they sauntered down the valley in the summer months; saw all the green and flowery fields lying in their beauty; saw the birds and animals pursuing their happy instincts in their secret and undisturbed haunts; and held long and affectionate conversations on the past and the present of all that concerned them, on the books they read, the

things they planned, the feeling of God's goodness, and the glorious prospects of a life to come. On these occasions the tried, but tender-hearted old man—old before his time—seemed to forget in the fervent piety which pervaded his whole being, all that he had suffered. He seemed to walk in a golden and glorified dream. Earth was heaven, for God was present. Everything was to him beautiful and precious. He

“Saw God in clouds, and heard Him in the wind.”

Everything around him became touched and transfigured by the fervency and permeating spirit of his inner being. Every green leaf, every soft air, every shadowy tree, had a poetic life and character to his eye and to his sensation. The clouds dropped fatness, and the soul of a deeper and more divine world was over all that lay around him. In his serene features, sublimed into something at once childlike and apostolic; in the tone of his voice, soft and full of feeling; and in the simple but deep love which animated him, Grace saw an impersonation of all that she had conceived of the religion of Christ, and with more than grateful feeling did she thank God that she had such a father, and could

minister to his earthly happiness. These were blissful hours to Grace Dorrington, for they were the response to all that was most identical to her own nature. Often they strolled down as far as the fishing-house on the edge of the large dam, overlooking the heath, and where the sigh of the dark pines which skirted the water, and the hushed glow of the expanded waste, with all its summer flowers, and browsing cattle, gave a deeper tone to the poetic trance of their feelings.

The summer-house in the wood of Coolside was completed. Hetty Harrison had selected an artist in London, of a very superior grade, who had embellished it with new frescoes of a most Arcadian loveliness, and had also executed the portraits of Grace, her father, her brother Hinchliffe, and Mr. Dorrington, which were hung in Grace's room, with miniatures of Hetty herself, Madam Van Orren, and the gallant-looking Mr. Khesteven. And here we must state a pleasant fact which we omitted before. The furniture of that charming room of Mrs. Dorrington's—that rich suite of chairs and cabinets of ebony and ivory, Grace had, to her great surprise and deep emotion, found there on her reaching the Dene, at the time of

her marriage, as the gift of her dear friend, Hetty Harrison. She had actually been at the sale with Mrs. Harrison when she bought these articles, but had never till the moment that she again found them there, had the least idea for whom they had been purchased ; Mrs. Harrison having merely said : “ I purchase these for a dear country friend of mine.”

During the winter Mrs. Dorrington had spent two months in the county-town, where she had been much caressed on account of her beauty and sweetness of disposition by many new friends. Thus all her time had been fully occupied, especially as in the early spring she became the mother of her first-born son. This addition to her happiness did not, however, prevent her continuing her many plans and improvements. These she had carried beyond her own premises. She had made a personal acquaintance with all the inhabitants of the village, had soon found that her sympathies were felt and called upon. She had to listen to troubles, and to help in difficulties.

With Jeremiah Gould she had greatly extended the attendance of the village school, and obtained from Mr. Dorrington a more healthy and commodious building for it. She had

commenced the serious study of domestic medicine, that she might be able to treat any not very serious ailment of the villagers, or to give a speedy check to any nascent fever, ere the doctor could arrive, for he lived four miles off. She had a small room in one of the cottages fitted up as a surgery, or rather apothecary's shop, where the doctor could keep a stock of medicines, and engaged him to come thither once a week to see any patients, and dispense the necessary remedies.

That grave, firm, yet kind and cordial character, which won her such deep reverence and devoted affection from the whole country round in after years, was already beginning to be felt, and Madam Dorrington was already regarded with a mixture of respect and attachment which time strengthened into something extraordinary.

In one respect, however, there was a cloud in her sky—a thorn in her side. The fellow Shellcross was still living at Westwood Hall; and though he affected whenever they passed each other in the village streets, to lift his hat, and make his bow with an air of such respect as the “stable mind” can put on, there was a positive and deep annoyance in the very sight

of the man. He was continually to be seen walking with his heavy riding-whip in his hand, or riding about with a lot of dogs after him. In his conversation amongst his comrades, and in the village ale-house, notwithstanding his assumed deference in Mrs. Dorrington's presence, he was not very chary of his remarks.

“A good, pious sort of creature that Mrs. Dorrington, but too insipid for him. Her mother wanted vastly to hang her on him, but he was not particularly partial to Methodists. Pity, though, that she had not a good money-bag to bring with her, for Dorrington had, he could tell them, need enough of it. A fine place, with a fine mortgage, and a fine wife, were rather difficult to keep up comfortably.”

Such were the fellow's frequent observations. Farmer Greator, who detested him, and had done so from the first, swelled with rage when he heard these things; and though he never even spoke or exchanged a word with him when they met, yet, after hearing these rumours, he made it a point to enter the “King of Prussia” public-house, whenever he saw Shellcross do so, and had a glass of ale, in order to catch him in such discourse. He had always a tremendous knotted black-thorn in his hand, and while

talking with the other villagers, never pointedly noticed Shellcross, or seemed to hear any remark addressed by him to himself, which soon, indeed, ceased to occur. But never did Shellcross name Mr. or Mrs. Dorrington in Farmer Greator's presence. The sight of that burly form, that ponderous black-thorn, and the knowledge of the farmer's determined character, were quite enough; and Shellcross, though for a time he affected to swagger, and joke, and talk loud in Greator's presence, by degrees carefully avoided meeting him there, or withdrew when he came in. But as for the farmer, he did not spare the racer in his conversations. On all occasions at market, or in the village, he declared that there was a fellow within a hundred miles of Westwood-steeple that would one of these days make a steeple-chase in double-quick time, and leave a few fools to wonder at their foolishness. "He may swagger about old Q., and his Grace of Dorset, and he may flaunt about on his Billy-Ruffian, and Tallymackus (Bellerophon and Telemachus, two horses), and call himself John Shellcross, Esquire, of Westwood Hall, but mark me, lads—hem! hem!—but having named names—I say nothing—you'll see."

But spite of Ben Greator's prognostications—and spite of sundry over-and-over recurring rumours and whispers of all not being right, and strange men being seen about the hall, not of a turkish stamp, but having more of the Jew and law-officer about them—John Shellcross, Esq. continued to live, and apparently to flourish, there. His horses were as numerous as ever: his grooms and jockies as abundant. He rode his favourite Bellerophon, and hallooed his troop of dogs, as jovially as ever. Every now and then there came a flying rumour that Shellcross had been unlucky in his betting at Newmarket, and was ruined; and then again came as rapid rumours of his wonderful successes. And after all, there was Shellcross, great in his stud, large in his affairs, and carrying his head as high and as impudently as ever.

The proximity of this man was a grievous annoyance to Mrs. Dorrington. His influence on the villagers was that of a moral pestilence. Her brother Anthony still associated with him; and spite of Grace's remonstrances, persisted in asserting that Shellcross was a good fellow at bottom. "He is none of your delicate ladies' men," said Anthony, "to be sure, but he is a

knowing and hearty fellow, who brings some life into the place."

"Death, Sir! death!" said Jeremiah Gould, "death and ruin, Sir, are what that man brings. Pray God that he may soon have run his course here; for while he is here, my labours are perfectly paralyzed."

"Then he *must* be a clever fellow," said Anthony, laughing, "if he can out-preach the parson."

It was now the height of summer. A vacancy had fallen in the representation of the county. The whole country round was in the agitation of a contested election. What an election was at that time of day, the older of our cotemporaries can remember; but the younger can form no conception of. Whig and Tory interests then were carried on to the very death. The fury and strife awakened, and which went on increasing from week to week, as the time of trial approached, till they had acquired an intensity that was terrific, have nothing like them in our more moderate days of curtailed contest. Bribery, open-houses kept all over the country for drink, the riding and running to and fro of the paid agents, and the voluntary zealots of the adverse parties, the rencounters and skir-

mishes, were something as unlike the practices of a civilized country as possible. By the time that the election commenced, the whole shire had worked itself up into a raging fever of rivalry and hatred. Men were seized on by different forces, bribed, threatened, carried off in post-chaises, exposed to rescues and attacks that were more like civil war than civil exercise of social rights. Every neighbourhood was thrown into hostile factions, and excited to the most violent rancour. Private histories were dragged forth and flung publicly in the faces of the different partizans. Scandals, ancient almost as the flood, floated up again: every man's debts and difficulties were dragged out and commented on with taunts and stinging malice. The most peaceful localities did not escape. They were traversed by the hot mist of political virulence, and were thrown into paroxysms of indignation and revenge. Men that a few weeks before were hobnobbing together over pipe and cup, and planning alliances of their children, became infuriated savages to each other, and flung up all their pacific plans with scorn and demoniac defiance.

The county-town itself was an image of Pandemonium in a tempest. The crushing crowds,

the galloping through the dense, raging masses, of carriages blazing with bright ribbons, drawn by horses covered with foam and dust, driven by postilions, whipping, spurring, and swearing, through throngs that yelled with curses or with hurras of triumph, and filled with drunken voters. This, for a week or ten days, was the constant scene—varied with scuffles, battles, tearing off of coats, and ducking and pumping on unfortunate wretches that fell into the hands of their enemies.

On this occasion, the neighbourhood¹ of Westwood was involved in all the agonies of this periodical public frenzy. The landowners were canvassed and canvassing in all directions. There was a desperate galloping and shouting, and congregating at the public-houses. There was a great split of the yeomanry into two parties, and plenty of tongue-fighting and re-crimination.

It happened, as was not wonderful, that Shellcross and his cronies were opposed, in their candidate, to Farmer Greatorrex and Hinchliffe Delmey, who were both of them most enthusiastic electioneerers. The fire which had smouldered long in the breasts of both these gentlemen now burst forth freely against this man. In

various quarters they met, first scowled at each other, then growled at each other—then thundered forth defiance, and flung about abundance of hard epithets and lacerating allusions.

On the last day of the election, when the fury and straining had reached their climax, and every man was actually thirsting for the blood of his neighbour, all Westwood seemed emptied of its male inhabitants. There was a profound silence there, owing to the whole of the men having rushed towards the county-town to witness the grand upshot. Only a few groups of women were to be seen, collected at the doors of different houses, gossiping on the expected event of the day.

Mrs. Dorrington, who had been for several days anxiously occupied in nursing her little boy, who was suffering under some disorder incident to infancy, had to-day, the crisis being favourably passed in her child, gone to lie down, and get some rest. About five o'clock she awoke refreshed, and was lying in a quiet, reflective mood, when she heard a foot on the stairs, a knock at her door, which she felt sure were her brother Hinchliffe's. She called out: "Come in;" and the next moment Hinchliffe

opened the curtains at the foot of the bed, and looked gravely but affectionately at her, but without speaking.

“Ah, my dear Hinchliffe!” exclaimed Mrs. Dorrington, “are you returned so soon? What is the news? Who has won?”

Her brother closed the curtains again, without speaking, and she heard him advance to the door as if going out. Astonished at his conduct, and inferring from it that his candidate was defeated, and that he was too much mortified to tell her so, she called quickly:

“Hinchliffe! Hinchliffe! what is the matter? Come here—I must speak with you.”

But he made no reply, closed the door behind him, and she heard him deliberately descending the stairs. Still more astonished, and actually alarmed, she exclaimed: “What *can* be the matter? What can it mean? There must be something shockingly amiss!” and she rang the bell violently.

The next moment the maid appeared, and Mrs. Dorrington demanded quickly:

“Where is my brother Hinchliffe? Why is he gone away without speaking?”

“Mr. Hinchliffe!” exclaimed the girl; “he

has not been here, Ma'am ; he is gone to the election."

"He was here this moment," said Mrs. Dorrington. "Quick ! follow him ! Tell him I must see him ! It is cruel to act thus !"

"Gracious ! Madam," said the maid, now in her turn astonished ; "it is impossible ! Not a soul has yet come back from the election."

"He was here this moment !" exclaimed Mrs. Dorrington, starting up in bed. "Don't stand there !—run down and overtake him."

The girl hastily, but with a look of wonder, closed the door, and seemed to fly down the stairs. Mrs. Dorrington could hear her call out to the other servants : there was a running, and banging of doors, and then voices outside. Presently the maid returned, saying :

"It is quite a mistake, Ma'am. It is quite certain nobody has been here. Nobody has seen or heard Mr. Hinchliffe. The women in the village are all looking out for the first person returning with the news from town. They declare not a soul has come into the village in that direction. Not a man is to be seen."

"Impossible !" cried Mrs. Dorrington, now astonished beyond measure, and really alarmed.

“ I tell you, Jane, I saw him myself; he must be somewhere about.”

As she spoke there was a sound of some kind at the top of the village-street.

“ There!” exclaimed the maid. “ Somebody comes from town. There! There are people hurrying into sight!”

Mrs. Dorrington sprung from the bed, wrapped her dressing-gown around her, and rushed to the window. A number of men covered with dust, and in a state of great excitement were come into view. But there was no shouting. The women crowded round to inquire. The news could not be good; it could not please anybody; there were no hurras. In the next moment there were loud shrieks; the women flew back to the others at their doors; some terrible tidings went like an electric flash along the street. There were arms thrown wildly up; aprons were suddenly raised to the faces of the women, as in deep grief; and there was a murmur as of lamenting, and fresh gathering around the men, and fresh men coming into sight.

“ Almighty God!” exclaimed Mrs. Dorrington, deathly pale, and shaking as with an overpowering tremor. “ What hast Thou in

store for me! Something dreadful has happened. I feel it—I know it—it is to my brother.”

The maid had darted from the room. There was a strange running and confusion of sounds below. Mrs. Dorrington rung the bell again—no one came—and in her terror she drew on her garments with hands that trembled like those of a paralytic person, and flew down stairs, where she found the whole group of servants standing in horror, and some in tears.

“My brother is dead!” said Mrs. Dorrington, pale and haggard as a ghost—“tell me! I will know!”

There was no answer, except sobs and suppressed weeping. At this moment a villager rushed into the hall, crying:

“Yes! it was Shellcross did it! They are after him.”

“Did what!” exclaimed Mrs. Dorrington,—“did what, man? Killed my brother?”

The man recoiled in astonishment and in terror—he had not seen Mrs. Dorrington, but he exclaimed in his surprise, “Yes, Madam!”—and Mrs. Dorrington heard nothing more. She sunk down on the spot, and with a deep groan lay like a corpse on the floor.

In the next moment Mr. Dorrington galloped up to the door, flung the reins on his horse's neck, and sprang into the house. The first glance convinced him that the news had reached the servants.

"Does she know? Has she heard it!" he demanded, wildly. "Take heed!—on your lives, say nothing to Mrs. Dorrington. I will break it."

But he had scarcely uttered those words when the prostrate form of his wife caught his eye.

"I am too late!" said he. "Gracious Heaven! But assist me;" and with that he took Grace in his arms, and bore her into the library.

"Ride for a doctor!" he said, hurriedly; and the next moment Dan Hardy was on the horse which Mr. Dorrington had just quitted, and was galloping up the street. Mr. Dorrington took his station by his wife to watch for the return of consciousness, and to soften to her as much as possible the terrible event which had occurred.

It was too true—Hinchliffe Delmey was dead. The election was over. The candidate supported by Hinchliffe and his party was elected.

The one supported by Shellcross was defeated. In the inn-yard, where they came for their horses, they and a number of persons from the same neighbourhood had met. The bad blood generated by the fierce contest there boiled over. The triumphant party did not conceal their triumph, nor spare their taunts on their beaten adversaries. Hinchliffe Delmey, in particular, was full of triumph, jokes, and cutting sarcasms. Shellcross was sullen and furious. Hinchliffe, Ben Greatorex, and others from Westwood, went in while their horses were saddling, and had a bottle or two of wine. They then galloped homeward, full of laughter and exultation; but on the way they passed Shellcross and his party, seated on their horses round the door of a village ale-house. The triumphant party gave a hurra at their expense; it was sent back, accompanied with curses.

Thus the two parties passed and repassed each other various times on the road, and the same mixture of jocose and bitter banter was resumed on each occasion. Ben Greatorex at first enjoyed the witty sallies of Hinchliffe, and the mortified discomfiture of the detested Shellcross; but, ere long, he began to suggest that it would be prudent to carry it no further. There

was a fiendish scowl on the brow of Shellcross, which boded some catastrophe—something more than even the rough skirmishing that had been seen during the hottest days of the contest.

He implored Hinchliffe to desist ; to let the fellow ride on, for he was well mounted, and for them to keep the way at a sober pace. But Hinchliffe exclaimed, “No, by Jove ! the horse-jockey shall not sneak into Westwood without a good hurra for our victory.” He put spurs to his horse, the young men who surrounded him did the same ; Shellcross and his fellows struck out into the same rapid gallop, and there was a furious race for the first reaching Westwood. Over hill and dale, through hamlet after hamlet, flew the rival horsemen, amid a cloud of dust, a clamour of irritating jests and injurious words.

As they drew near Westwood, and had to ascend a steep and narrow lane, the horses of Hinchliffe and Shellcross came into close contact. Shellcross broke forth in terrible oaths and imprecations, and amid his abuse uttered the names of Hinchliffe’s mother and sister. The young man, already heated with passion and wine, dared him to name those names again.

“Name them !” exclaimed Shellcross, “ay,

twenty times. What! is your sister become so great a lady that her name is not to be uttered, because she has married a man with a great house, and a monkey on every chimney?"

"Look there!" said Hinchliffe, pointing to Shellcross's house, now just before them; "there sits one monkey on the chimney, and another on the hearth!" and at the same time, as Shellcross pushed his horse against Hinchliffe's knee, the young man, in a moment of resentment, struck Shellcross across the back with his whip.

It was a fatal blow. The blood mounted into the gambler's face till it looked almost black again. His eyes shot fire, and with a furious oath he snatched a pistol from his bosom, and discharged it at Hinchliffe.

The young man gave a sudden leap in his saddle, and fell forward beneath his horse's feet.

The consternation which this occasioned is not to be described. The riotous and contending group were silent in a moment. All animosity was instantly forgotten. There was a general dismounting, and a crowd was stooping over the fallen young man. He was dead.

The body was speedily conveyed to the nearest public-house, and a doctor sent for. It was useless; the ball had passed through the heart, and life was extinct in the same moment.

Ben Greator, who on his heavy horse had not been able to overtake the wild galloppers, was the first to come up, as they were carrying the body into the inn. Mr. Dorrington, who had ridden home early to bring his wife the news, and learn how the child was, saw the crowd around the ale-house door, and a man holding Hinchliffe's smoking horse. He rode up to beg Hinchliffe to go down home and dine with him, and was met by the horrible disclosure. He flew home, to outrun, if possible, the fatal news, and came as we have seen.

CHAPTER VI.

THE event recorded in our last chapter, it may be supposed, fell like a bombshell on the place, and ran through the country round with rapid wonder. The beauty and popular manners of Hinchliffe Delmey, which had made him a general favourite, now, united to this tragic fate, rose in the general mind into something marvellous. His fine person, his remarkably splendid hair, his good-heartedness, and all his free and frank qualities, were exalted in the feeling of deep sympathy to the highest degree. The women declared that he was the handsomest man that had ever been seen in those parts. The men asserted that he had a noble

heart, and would have risen to something distinguished. In a word, a charm and a poetry were thrown about his memory ; every weakness was forgotten, and his fate invested him with a legendary halo of romance, which lingered long, and is not yet quite extinguished in that neighbourhood.

Immediate and almost furious quest was made for his murderer ; but he was nowhere to be found. He had availed himself of the confusion to disappear. As the news of Hinchliffe Delmey's bloody death reached his immediate relatives, it came like a stunning blow, an incredible fable, followed by effects as various as the dispositions of the parties. Mrs. Dorrington, on recovering consciousness, again relapsed into insensibility. She passed from one swoon to another, in a manner which alarmed not only her husband but the doctor. Surmounting these, her grief was as excessive as her nature was sensitive, and her affection for her brother was strong. His character had of late, ever since his change towards his father, been rapidly working itself clear, and developing qualities and abilities so bright and endearing, that Grace had calculated confidently that in him she was to have a life-long and a heart-felt comfort. The more

she reflected on these brilliant promises of life and affection, and by what hand they had been cut off, the more she was overcome by excessive grief.

Mr. Dorrington, and the kind and sympathizing Jeremiah Gould, in vain reminded her of her duty to her child and to God. These caused her to put up short and passionate prayers, but left her weak and relapsing into tears. It was only when Mr. Dorrington said: "And your father, Grace, think of him; think how he will need support," that the power to arrest her feelings was reached. At these words she suddenly commanded herself, and exclaimed: "My God! my poor father! where is he? What *will* become of him."

Pale as death, but with her tears staunched, she rose trembling, but compelling herself to endurance, and demanded where her father was. Her husband replied that he had inquired, and found that he was at Andrew Harrison's. The carriage was quickly got out, and Grace and Jeremiah Gould hurried away in it.

On reaching Andrew Harrison's, they found Francis Delmey overwhelmed with grief, while poor Andrew Harrison sate by him, condoling with him rather by looks than words. Grace

flew into her father's arms, and their tears flowed in silence together. It was now her part, however, to console and support, and she nerved herself to her duty. The poor heart-crushed father was evidently filled with the very idea that Farmer Greatorrex had expressed—that Hinchliffe was another Absalom, though unlike him in his latter filial conduct, for he continued to utter as he sat bowed in agony the words of David, only varying the name : “ Hinchliffe, Hinchliffe ! my son ! my son ! would I had died for thee.”

Grace and the good Jeremiah prevailed on him to accompany them, or rather they took him between them unresistingly, and placing him in the carriage drove back to the Dene.

Very different was the conduct of the bereaved mother. When the news reached her, she gave a start, and leaned against the wall of the room for support. It seemed as if a stunning blow was given to her. But she uttered no cry, shed no tear, neither fainted, nor spoke for some time. A deadly paleness seized her ; even her strong and Amazonian frame shook like an aspen-tree. Then, as if uttering the words only to herself, she said, sternly : “ Villain ! I will kill him !”

With a determined, though a somewhat stag-

gering step, she stalked into the parlour, took down the very horse-pistols which Grace had used to defend herself against Shellcross, and which her father had brought back from Jeremiah Gould's; took them down, drew the balls, fired the powder, reloaded them, and sticking them into a belt, which she buckled around her waist, put on her bonnet and shawl, and issued forth. Straight up to the village she ascended, passed the very public-house in which lay the body of her murdered son, and around the door of which still crowded curious spectators. But she neither paused, nor looked aside, but like some desperate woman of the old and barbarous times, bent on some deed of deadly vengeance, as she indeed was, she marched on stately, dark, and spectral.

There was a whisper, and then a dumb, deep silence in the crowd round the ale-house door. Those who met the unhappy mother face to face, started and stood petrified, there was such a ghastly deathliness, such a stony desperation in her countenance. But she noticed them not. She went on, entered the court of Shellcross's house, and entered the house itself without stopping to knock. The terrified servants shrunk back aghast as they saw her. In each

hand she now held a pistol, and went on right to Shellcross's parlour. He was not there.

"Where is your master?" demanded she haughtily of a groom who passed near the door. "Show me to him at once, or I will murder you."

The affrighted man, shrinking back against the wall, exclaimed, "Oh, God, Madam! he is not here—he is gone!"

"Tell me not your lies, wretch!" said the fearful woman. "I will see him,—I will have his heart's blood! Go on! Show me where he is, or die!"

The horrified man again protested that he would show her, but that he was gone—"gone off instantly on horseback—that Mr. Anthony and Mr. Greatorex had ridden after him to town."

For a moment she paused, but quickly added: "It is well, but show me through the house—show me all," and she traversed the whole house from garret to cellar, rapidly following her terrified guide.

"He is not here," said she, when the search was finished. "Now bring me out his best horse, properly saddled; and be quick!"

Her order was promptly obeyed; and spring-

ing to the back of the spirited steed with the agility of her youth, she galloped forth, and took the way towards the county-town, followed by the wondering eyes of the villagers, and of the servants of Shellcross, who had fled from her presence into the street.

The evening was closing in duskily over the wide, brown moorland; it was, in fact, night, but a midsummer night, as Farmer Greatorex was riding at a gentle trot homewards from the town, where he had been with a number of others in pursuit of Shellcross. He was thinking over this strange event, the conclusion of the election, and of Shellcross's career, the latter so much worse than he had even anticipated, when he was struck with the extraordinary sight of a tall woman in her ordinary dress coming riding at a fiery speed towards him. As she approached, he recognised the horse for no other than Shellcross's Bellerophon, and his astonishment was raised to the highest pitch when he discovered that its rider was no other than Mrs. Delmey. Mrs. Delmey on Shellcross's horse was a phenomenon which confounded all the farmer's speculations; but as she drew nearer the brace of horse-pistols in her belt, revealed by her shawl flying behind her, and

the deathly haggardness of her countenance, struck him with awe. He comprehended the object which had thus mounted this impetuous and now deeply-wounded woman, and set her in chase of her son's assassin. The deep, fierce-gaze of her wild eye was fixed on the farmer, as she suddenly drew up, saying eagerly :

“You have not overtaken the villain ! You have let him escape !”

As soon as Greatorrex could find utterance for astonishment and real grief at the sight of this extraordinary woman, he replied :

“Certainly we have not yet caught him, but they are after him, and I trust that he will not escape them.”

“Then I must lose no time. I *must* have him !” said Mrs. Delmey, giving her horse the whip, but Greatorrex seized the rein, and cried :

“Stop, madam, stop ! you can do no good.”

“Let me go, man ! I will on ! I must have his blood !”

But Greatorrex held fast the rein, and assayed to speak.

“I will on !” exclaimed the desperate woman. “For your life, let me go !” and she snatched one of her pistols from her belt ; but the stout farmer caught her arm, and bore it downward,

so that the muzzle of the pistol pointed to the ground ; and as resolute in his turn, exclaimed :

“ Mrs. Delmey, I feel for you. I would kill the villain for you. But, hear me. The coach is gone—they are off ; and you are too late to catch them before they must catch him, if they do catch him.”

“ Who are off?—where ?” said Mrs. Delmey, for a moment ceasing to strive against the lusty hold of the farmer.

“ Your son, madam. Antony and the officer, with the warrant, are off to Liverpool by the coach. They will take him if he have not got off quick as lightning.”

An expression of unutterable anguish passed over the pale, excited features of Mrs. Delmey, as she said :

“ Gone ! and I am too late—he will escape ! If there should be a ship just sailing ! Distraction ! Why was I not swifter !”

“ They will let no grass grow, madam,” said the farmer. “ Antony is all on fire. He now sees what a devil this was. They’ll have him, be sure, Mrs. Delmey—they will.”

The farmer knew that a ship was about to sail, if the wind was favourable, for America, before the pursuers could well reach Liverpool

—his only hope was, before Shellcross himself arrived ; but he had some hours' start of them. Of these things, however, he said nothing, but set himself to induce the outraged mother to turn homewards again. But it was like attempting almost to dam a river or turn the wind. The passion of grief and revenge was mighty in that masculine and tempestuous soul, and drove her vehemently onwards. Every other thought and feeling for the time was lost in the one giant impulse—towards the satisfaction of blood for blood !

“ You deceive me, Greatorex !” she exclaimed. “ There is another coach to-night—I must and will go.”

“ No !” cried the farmer. “ Before God, I tell you the truth ; and if there were, you would be too late.”

“ Too late ! Is there a ship just sailing, then ? Death and madness ! the villain will escape !” and again she made a violent effort to loose herself from the farmer's grasp.

But Greatorex held his hold, though the horse on which she rode reared and plunged, as if to aid her escape.

“ If you will go, Madam, go !” said Greatorex ; “ but I tell you it is as useless as to fire

that pistol at the clouds. Come home, Madam—come home. There are sorrowful duties there that call us.”

The furious expression passed from Mrs. Delmey's face at these words. She was silent—her lips quivered; there was a convulsive effort to restrain her feelings; the dry, tearless, but glistening eyes became clouded with the shadow of an unutterable misery.

“You are right, farmer,” she said: “I will go home.”

They turned their horses homewards: they rode rapidly, but without a word. It was yet some miles to Westwood, but they passed them in unbroken silence; only as Mrs. Delmey reached the foot of the hill ascending to the village, she suddenly stopped, flung from her the bridle, leaped to the ground, and with one firmly-uttered “Good night!” passed through a stile leading over the fields to Fulbourne. The farmer drove the horse before him to Shellcross's gate, rung the bell, and left him.

Anthony and the officer were too late. Shellcross had just saved the ship; he was already out at sea, with a brisk and favourable gale, as his pursuers reached the port. In the vast regions of America the wretch buried his guilty head,

and on this side of the water was never more heard of. His establishment at Westwood was dispersed, as Farmer Greatorrex had foretold, with the rapidity of magic. Scarcely had the fact of his assassination of young Delmey appeared in the papers, when creditors came hastening in from every point of heaven. There was execution upon execution; horses, cattle, dogs, furniture, were sold by auction; and Westwood Hall, in less than three weeks, stood deserted and shut up.

Meantime Hinchliffe Delmey had been laid in the family vault in the churchyard of Westwood, amid one of the vastest crowds which ever was assembled on such an occasion. The character of the deceased, and the circumstances of his death, had brought the people from all the country and villages round for many miles' distance.

When the coroner's inquest had been held, which, contrary to the opinions of the excited people, but in strict accordance with the law, pronounced a verdict only of manslaughter against Shellcross, the body had been removed in its coffin to the Dene. There, for the first time, Mrs. Delmey entered to behold her murdered son, as he lay in marble beauty, and with

his rich sunny hair about his face. There she and her daughter stood side by side, and in speechless grief over the dead; and there Grace Dorrington sought, in that moment of solemn annihilation of hard thoughts and divisions, to express her desire for reconciliation, by gently taking her mother's hand; but the hand was coldly withdrawn, and the hard, stern woman followed the bier of her slaughtered son in deep but unbending sorrow.

Time passed on, and religion soothed the lacerated hearts of Francis Delmey and his daughter; but in the grief of Mrs. Delmey was retained the severe stoicism of her character. Though her hair had grown rapidly grey; though a change as of twenty years had passed over her countenance, ploughing deep furrows, and rendering what was before harsh, more rigid and faded, though, in fact, she bore every outward sign of having passed, through terrible suffering, from apparent middle-age to age itself; yet she never complained to others, never courted the least sympathy: she scorned to expose what she deemed her weakness to a single human soul.

Yet the servants have heard her when she supposed herself alone, talking audibly to herself:

“ Yes ! I did it. I killed him. I pointed the pistol at his father’s head, and it is a judgment. I prayed when my beautiful boy was at the point of death in his childhood, that that punishment might be spared me, that it might be something else—and it is this. Worse ! oh, a thousand times worse ! My beautiful Hinchliffe. The pride of the country too ! he was only left till everybody loved him, and admired him, and then he was taken, and in this manner ! It is hard—hard. Does God never forgive ? But I did it, and I will bear it. No ; they shall never know what I suffer.”

But in the dark Indian-like endurance of her blinded nature, she never felt the suffering she inflicted on her husband, and her own child—her daughter. There was a gloomy sense of judgment, but no relenting, no softening ; and thus this extraordinary woman went inflexibly on her way.

CHAPTER VII.

AMID the gloom and desolation which the fate of Hinchliffe Delmey had cast over the Dene, there arose one bright spot in the clouds. Mrs. Hetty Harrison wrote repeatedly with all her sweetness and affection, to cheer by her sympathy, her dear friend, Mrs. Dorrington; and, probably, because this correspondence had tended to show her how deep was the wound which this event had inflicted on the peace of her beloved Grace, she took care to fill her letters with all the news that she could muster from the circle of their London acquaintance, and the incidents of London life. She had discovered, that though Grace, during her abode

in town could not reconcile herself to the idea of living there, that she yet looked back to her sojourn in the capital with a peculiar pleasure. That she was fond of recalling all the places and persons they had seen together, and received with delight all the accounts of the movements and gaieties of the city. But the piece of news which gave Grace a start of rapturous surprise, was contained in these words at the conclusion of a long gossiping letter :

“And now, my dear Grace, I must tell you another bit of news, which concerns us both. My father, the other day, as is his custom always when I have letters by post, said to me : ‘ Well, any further particulars from our dear friend at the Dene ? I hope she goes on gathering strength and resignation, as becomes her power of mind, and her real piety. That was a terrible blow, my dear Hetty ; it is a thousand pities that horse-jockey got off, one would have gone willingly all the way to have seen him hanged. But she must bear up, it is no use drooping ; tell her from me—it does no good. Tell her I shall keep my word, and come and see her before long ; and I expect she will cheer up, and be herself when we are

down there. The country so far off, must be dull I fancy; it is to her I look for its best sunshine and cheeriness.' 'I will tell her, father,' I said; 'but when do you really mean to go? Why not soon? It would be the truest friendship to go, and help to drive away her sadness. Oh, dear me! how I should like to go! How impatient it does make me, when I think of it.' 'Why—you see, dearest child, it can't be this summer, it is the Amsterdam year, and John must go there. No, not this year—you might go just as well, while John is away, but I could not; no, let us say next year.' 'Well, next year,' I replied, seizing on the promise; 'it is fixed for next year, then. I may say so to Grace.' 'Ay! with all my heart, child, next summer certainly, if we all live as long.'

"So there, Grace; you see we are pledged to visit you next summer. Won't it be delightful? Oh, I cannot tell how the idea delights me. I do so long to clasp you once more to my heart, and to make myself familiar with your dear Dene, and all your daily life and haunts. And, do you know, the moment Madam Van Orren heard of it, she said: 'So! so! but I don't mean to be left behind. I shall go too, so you must keep a corner in the carriage for me; for

go I will, though Mr. Khesteven never asks me.'

"There, dearest Grace! there is an avalanche hanging over your head—a whole regiment of us—bag and baggage—children and all. Are you not afraid? Don't you repent of asking us? But it is of no use—it is too late now, for we have set our minds on it, and nothing will turn us."

This news was an actual cordial to Grace. It gave a fillip to her spirits. It gave her a new subject of strong interest to occupy her thoughts. Mr. Dorrington was extremely pleased too—it was an honour to have such guests. He was determined that they should not find the country thereabout dull. He began to consider what they could do to the place to make it more complete, and he resolved in the spring to give the whole house and premises a thorough painting and putting in order. It would have been difficult to say what wanted putting in order; but notwithstanding, sundry things were immediately thought of. The news flew at once to Lerk. John Harrison's wife and children, and the immensely rich father-in-law, were coming down; and Andrew's wife was in a terrible fluster to put their place in order too.

Andrew smiled, and replied in that broad dialect and peculiar style which, it will be seen,

was so familiarly used amongst themselves even by people of this class in that rural district.

“Dunna trouble thyself, my wench. When all’s dun, thou canna make this lodge in a garden of cowcumbers, into Mortlake, nor even Bread Street. Th’ palace and th’ cottage will remain th’ palace and th’ cottage still. Be content—appear in thy own likeness, lass. Dunna try to swell like th’ frogs i’th’ fable. It’s not for our riches or our grandeur that they took to John so, I’ll a-warrant thee, but just because they liked him, and because they are sensible people, that caren more for a good inside than a fine outside. Tak’ my advice, be quiet, and easy, and dunna put thysen out o’th’ way, and thou’ll please ’em well enough.”

Andrew was a philosopher in his way, but it was not easy to make one of his wife. She was in a fever of agitation and anxiety—pleased with the honour of such visitors and relations, but at her wits’ end what to do with them; and while impatient to see her grandchildren, secretly wishing they were not coming.

“Heaven save us, Andrew!” she continued, “where in the world are we to stow them all away? Such fine folks! and such fine servants as they’ll bring? Lord have mercy on us! what’s to be done is more nor I can tell.

Andrew, thou mun have th' bricklayers, -and build a new chamber or two. There's Mr. Delmey's room, Mrs. John can have—but where Squire Khesteven's to be put—good gracious me! Lord above knows! It makes my head spin round to think on't. Will they like to come into our little shop, thinkster, with all our balls of packthread, and pounds of candles? Hadent ta better, thinkster, shut up th' shop, and retire, at least out of th' shop concern? Thou's got enough, and can employ thyself i'th' malt-kiln, and i'th' land."

Andrew smiled.

"Prithee ha'e done, lass," he said. "I shall neither touch brick nor mortar, nor build rooms, nor shut up th' shop. Who's to carry on th' business so well, or supply such good things to the folks? And it's not here as they are coming, but to the Dene. I shall be glad to see them—any of them, and all of them—if they can come simply and quietly like, now and then, as I've no doubt they will, for they are reasonable people; and I shall say: 'Such as I have I give unto thee:' and that's what the Apostle said; and no man can require more, if he's a reasonable man."

Mrs. Harrison was silenced, but not altoge-

ther quite at ease, certainly ; and she determined to get all her linen in good order, to have a new set of knives and forks, sundry pieces of crockery, and above all a new corkscrew ; the old one, that they had when they were married, was so shabby. And she would have plenty of new-laid eggs, and fowls, and ducks—those are dear things in London—and tell John to be sure to send her some of the very finest tea in Amsterdam. There was a great spreading-out on the orchard-grass, and watering of pieces of tablecloth and sheeting, that she had spun and had had woven ; and she contrived to get in several rolls of carpeting, and stuffs for new curtains, when Andrew was out of the way. And above all, she determined, at spring, to get the back-yard new paved, and have a new scraper at the door.

Autumn, winter, spring went over as if they neither troubled themselves with Mrs. Harrison's fears, nor Mrs. Dorrington's joyful anticipations. The bright and verdurous summer lay once more over the Dene, and another blue-eyed little boy was waiting for the arrival of the London guests, that Mr. Khesteven, and Madam Van Orren might stand as godfather and godmother at the font. The time came, and one bright, long fine day, a handsome carriage and four drove down the

little street of Westwood, followed by another carriage and pair, covered with a multitude of boxes and portmanteaus, and, after bringing the whole population to their doors, stopped at the Dene.

The great London people were really come ; the ringers hurried to the steeple to give a merry peal on the bells, and in the shady library of the Dene were assembled a group of the happiest people on the earth. There was the gay and gallant Mr. Khesteven, declaring that he was quite charmed, and astonished at the beauty of the country, and at that of the Dene. There was Madam Van Orren looking older, but very stately and happy, between her brother and her niece. There was Hetty Harrison, after having kissed and embraced Grace, with the tears and smiles and the passionate joy of her affectionate heart, embracing Grace's two little boys, one an infant of but a few months old ; and everybody embracing and talking to Mrs. Harrison's three fine children—her boy and two girls. And there were Grace and Mr. Dorrington in the very centre of human felicity.

. All that and the next day the travellers kept themselves quiet to recover from the fatigue of the long journey, except that Francis Delmey

and Madam Van Orren had a deal of talk in the summer-house on Coolside; and Grace and Mrs. Harrison, in Grace's delightful room, from whence Mrs. Harrison was never tired of looking over the country, while Mr. Dorrington was obliged to go to business, and Mr. Khesteven and Andrew Harrison strolled with the children through the grounds. Andrew and his wife had come to pay their respects, and Mrs. Harrison had been wonderfully pleased both with her daughter-in-law, her three beautiful grandchildren, and not the less with Mr. Khesteven. Andrew was at first a little on the fidgets by seeing his wife make such a number of deep courtesies to the London friends, and speak so much out of her usual way in her attempt at what he called to be fine, and talk Dutch; but as they returned home Mrs. Harrison declared that she should not be afraid of them any more. That they were just as free as Parson Gould, and thought no more of themselves than if they had not a penny to bless themselves with. "That's the way I reckon," said Mrs. Harrison, "with really great folks; they are not like your little stuck-up gentry in the country."

Both Mr. Khesteven, his daughter, and Madam Van Orren, thought Grace so wonder-

fully improved in her looks. Her native air, they thought, had worked miracles in her. She seemed taller, somewhat stouter, and had such an air of brightness and enjoyment about her as rejoiced them to see. Mr. Khesteven rode over the grounds, and the neighbourhood, with Mr. Dorrington; was wonderfully taken with Jeremiah Gould and Farmer Greatorex, at whose homely, outspoken honesty he was greatly amused. He would not be contented without a ride past Fulbourne to see the spot where that she-devil, as he called Mrs. Delmey, ruled; and he every day declared that he felt himself growing quite young again in this pure country air, and in the country diet, where everything was so fresh, so sweet and delicious as he had never experienced. He owned that he was half inclined to take Westwood Hall, purge it with brimstone from all traces of the villain Shell-cross, and come down every summer.

Hetty Harrison cried, "Do! do! do! dearest father! Oh! what a happiness to be every summer so near Grace."

"Ay, but," said the old gentleman, "John cannot ride hither and back to business quite so easily as to Mortlake."

Hetty Harrison sighed. "Ah! I had forgotten that."

Days rolled on rapidly: they were full of pleasure. The children were in a world of continual delight to them. Andrew Harrison came daily, and with Francis Delmey wandered into the fields with them, showing them birds, flowers, hedgehogs, and a host of new things. Anthony Delmey came, and let them watch him fishing, and caught young birds for them to look at. Then they went with all the party to Lerk, where they had an early dinner, with plenty of green gooseberry pies, with custards and cream; and Mrs. Harrison found all made quite easy to her by the servants bringing plate from the Dene, and the cook from thence preparing the dinner, and the servants serving it up. She had only to sit and help, and saw things go on as if by magic, Andrew having told her only to keep herself quiet, which it was rather difficult to do at first, and not fully attainable, till after sundry heats and perspirations, by which time dinner was in full flow; and Mr. Khesteven telling them a story of a strange Irishman, who came before him when Lord Mayor, which kept them all in laughter.

After dinner they went out to the great dam of Lerk, and had a row in the boat, all about under the great shady trees, and amongst several little islands, from amongst which flew or swam out numbers of wild ducks, water-hens, and the like, to the immense delight of the children and everybody. And they landed on the islands, all deep in grass and reeds ; and nobody was more delighted than Mr. Khesteven and Mrs. Hetty Harrison, to be shown the nests of wild ducks, of swans, and of pheasants, with all their eggs, in various places. Jeremiah Gould, who was of the party, brought out his flute, and played in his most consummate style, and Mrs. Hetty Harrison and Grace sung to it. Mr. Khesteven wondered where Jeremiah could have acquired such an extraordinary musical skill ; it was marvellous ; and said, that really he had no conception of the pleasures of a country life. Why, it was like being in the happy valley of Rasselas. After this, Mrs. Hetty Harrison and Mrs. Dorington walked over the fields to Lerk, every now and then, with the children, passing once by Fulbourne, in order to gratify the curiosity of Hetty, to see the place of Grace's birth and childhood, though at the same time afraid to

encounter the dreaded Mrs. Delmey ; but they saw nothing of her.

Next an excursion into the Peak was planned, Mr. Dorrington accompanying them, in which they visited Haddon, Chatsworth, Matlock, and Dove Dale, and then drove on to the Staffordshire Potteries, to inspect the china works of that extraordinary district. On their return, Mr. Khesteven and his daughter called on several county families that they had known in town, and Mr. Khesteven was invited to a grand dinner by the corporation of the county-town. He had, when in Parliament, where he was always the champion of civic rights, done the corporation some service ; and though he had now long since resigned his place in Parliament, and his aldermanic gown too, this service was not forgotten, and the freedom of the town was conferred on him. The old gentleman accepted the honour with all due grace and acknowledgment, though he said aside, as it were, to his friends, that when he came into the country he liked to be in the country ; but he considered that it might tend to do Mr. Dorrington good in his practice there, and therefore he complied with great good-humour.

So rolled on this pleasant visit in the country: pleasant it was to all. Madam Van Orren declared that she had really enjoyed it this time, and did not find it at all lonely. It would have been quite unreasonable if she had, for she was all the time in nearly as complete a crowd as she could have found in her beloved Cheapside. Grace and Hetty Harrison had renewed their heart-intercourse, and grown still nearer and dearer to each other. Mr. Khesteven had been almost a boy again, and had one day astonished, and even alarmed his daughter and Madam Van Orren, by informing them that he had been with Mr. Dorrington down into a coal-pit, sixty yards deep, and had explored the dark, subterranean regions, amid a troop of as black and good-natured fellows as the three kingdoms could produce. His daughter turned pale at the news, and Madam Van Orren said:

“Well, it really was time to be off back to London, or she would not answer for Mr. Khesteven next jumping off the church-steeple.”

The old gentleman replied gaily, that he would not promise her to do that feat, but he would promise her not to jump on to the steeple. He wished they could have seen him

in his flannel dress, his pit cap, and with his candle in his hand. He was determined to astonish them in London with his travels both above and beneath ground, in caves, and copper-mines, and pits.

The days of this happy visit were drawing to a close, when an event occurred, which at once excited the indignation, and yet the amusement of all parties ; but it deserves a distinct chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

JEREMIAH GOULD had invited the Dorringtons and their London friends to dine and spend the evening with him, as he was obliged to make a journey down into Wiltshire, to his native place. The party had particularly enjoyed themselves. They had wandered amongst his flower-beds, and Mr. Khesteven and his daughter had been particularly interested by the survey of his splendid roses and geraniums ; his carnations and piccotees. He had explained all their peculiar beauties and perfections, and had named three plants of extraordinary promise, the ' London Merchant,' the ' Hetty Harrison,' and the ' Van Orren.' He had given them

some of the most exquisite performances on the fiddle and violoncello, and Grace and Hetty Harrison had sung some of their sweetest songs. All were in admiration of the wonderful powers of the worthy man on his favourite instruments. He was an enthusiast in all that related to the grand cathedral music of the Tudor and Stuart times, and almost equally so of the best social music of those eras. The *Cantiones Sacræ* of Tallis and Birde; the noble *Non Nobis Domine* of William Birde, and the touching anthem of Richard Farrant, "Lord, for Thy tender mercy's sake;" the anthems of Michael Wise, and the magnificent *Te Deum* and *Jubilate* of Henry Purcell, furnished, in choice portions, the favourite enjoyment of his Sunday evenings, while the canzonets and madrigals of Morley, Wilbye and Ford, rivalled in his judgment, all the compositions for lighter hours of modern times. There were no moderns whom he placed in comparison with what he called those old British masters but the three foreigners, Handel, Haydn and Mozart, some of whose finest passages he executed in a style which astonished his hearers this evening.

The evening was the more enjoyed, as their amiable host was about to leave them in the

morning, and would not return during their stay. They all took a cordial and regretful leave of the good man whom they had learned so thoroughly to esteem, and the more so as they learned from Grace, who was in all his secrets, that he was bound on a somewhat sad and depressing business. The squire, his brother, was not acting by far as he could desire, and his journey was one of strong, but he feared, not very hopeful remonstrance. Farmer Greatorrex was to accompany him to the county-town early in the morning, whence he was to proceed alone on horseback to his destination. The farmer himself had retired early from the company, declaring that Jeremiah's *violent-sheller* always made him melancholy, and the heat of his room made his head ache; as for the matter of that, it always did—for even in winter, he said the Vicar never kept it at less than ninety degrees of *diameter*. Greatorrex's ninety degrees of diameter elicited a general laugh; on which the farmer, of course, imagining the laugh was at the expense of the Vicar, nodded a "good night," and was gone.

"A fine, hearty fellow that," said Mr. Khe-steven, "and his mistakes are worth anything. I

like him vastly : he is to me the genuine specimen of the English yeoman."

" Oh, a most worthy, sterling heart," said Jeremiah, " but dreadfully overrun with prejudices. Do you know, being at the county-town the other day to get some one of the young clergymen there to officiate for me during my few weeks of absence, I quite accidentally met with a most respectable and pious middle-aged gentleman in Orders, who most kindly offered his services. He declared that he should feel it quite a providence that he had fallen in with me ; that not being attached to any cure it was his highest delight to render himself useful to the Church and to his brother clergymen, by officiating for them. He was never so happy as when in the country. He enjoyed its quiet greenness, it was refreshing to his spirit, and he found the minds of the people so open to receive the good seed of the Word. He represented himself of a good, a very good, family of the north of England. I recognised the name, and he showed me a list of the many incumbents for whom he had supplied, and their letters of cordial acknowledgment of his truly brotherly services.

" I was delighted to have met with him. God

surely threw him in my way, and so at once I accepted his offer, and brought him home with me. I don't know when I have been more pleased with the grave yet polite manner, and feeling, fervent piety of any man, than I was with his, as we came home together. His delight with the place, too, when he had seen it, was extraordinary. He declared it a place and a country so entirely after his own heart: so still, so pure, so primitive, and having such a refreshing and renovating air."

"Ay, there he is quite right," said Mr. Khesteven, "the air here is quite wonderful."

"I told Mr. Blenkinsop, the reverend gentleman," said Jeremiah, "that you have found it precisely so."

"But where is he?" inquired Mr. Khesteven, the rest of the company looking inquiringly; "why did you not introduce him to us?"

"I should have liked extremely to have seen him," said Mrs. Dorrington: "where have you hidden him, Mr. Gould?"

"I have not hidden him," replied Jeremiah. "I wished him to be here, that I might have had the pleasure of making you all acquainted

with him ; but he was obliged to go to town to attend to some little business that he was about, when I so opportunely met with him, and to bring over his luggage. But you will all see him, and I am in hope that he will even settle amongst us ; for he says that he has for some time thought that he could do a great deal of good by the teaching of youth. He considers the education given in our great schools not only very defective in actual learning, but very pernicious in morals. Too many of the masters of these establishments he regards but as mere adventurers, more interested in the profit from, than the benefit to, their pupils. He has, therefore, been looking about some time for a fine healthy location, distant from towns and temptations, where there are a fine, healthy air, and cheap and plentiful provisions, especially of good sweet bread and milk.

“ When he came near the village, and looked round over the country and to the distant hills, he exclaimed: ‘The very place! Were there but a house and grounds large enough, on this very spot I could commence my grand educational experiments.’

“ ‘The very thing you wish, my reverend friend,’ I replied, ‘ is ready to your hand,’ and

I showed him the vacated place of—" Jeremiah avoided the hateful name of Shellcross, and added, after a slight pause, of " the hall.

" No sooner had he seen it, than he exclaimed with enthusiasm: ' Of all the places in the world—the very place ! How strange, my dear Sir,' he added, ' that houses are standing in the earth prepared by a good Providence for our abode—and we know not of it—and believe we have no resting-place. How mysterious are the ways of Him who doeth all things well.'

" He desired me at once to secure it for him, thinking the rent very reasonable ; and I have done so. I have ordered, at his instance, all the horse-sheds and the like to be pulled down, and I trust we shall soon see their timber converted into school-benches and other more useful things than they at present are."

" How you astonish me, Mr. Gould !" said Mrs. Dorrington. " I don't think it a bad situation for a school, if it be not a little too distant from the county-town ; but I am really astonished at the suddenness of the thing. But what says Mr. Greatorrex ? You were saying something of him connected with this matter."

“Just so,” said Jeremiah Gould: “I told you what violent prejudices he has, with all his good qualities. He takes likes and dislikes, at first sight, in a most irrational manner, and without a particle of evidence; and then all the world cannot change him. He sticks to his opinion to the end of time.”

“But he is right often,” said Francis Delmey, in a firm but sad tone. “He detested that Shellcross from the first and to the last.”

“Oh! he is right often, certainly,” said Jeremiah Gould: “I don’t deny it. God forbid I should wrong Greatorex in the least, for he is a noble fellow; but still it is true, that he is amazingly hasty and obstinate in his judgments. It is a saying here, occasioned by his arbitrary conduct, when a man was condemned by him, as constable of the parish, to be put in the stocks, though strong grounds were shown for believing him innocent of the charge against him: ‘Right or wrong, set Baguly in the stocks!’—that was his doctrine; and it was done.”

“But I believe he was right there too,” said Francis Delmey.

“Well, it turned out that he was right,” said

Jeremiah Gould; "but then, if it had turned out different, the poor man would have suffered for his prejudice."

"True," said Francis Delmey; "but Ben Greatorex's prejudices are instincts. *I* never knew him wrong."

"The man, I should say, has a wonderfully clear insight into human nature," said Mr. Khesteven; and Mrs. Dorrington knowing this, and that Jeremiah Gould was by no means so infallible in his judgments, added:

"I am very desirous to see this Mr. Blenkinsop; when will he be here again?"

"Oh, to-morrow or next day, at farthest: I am quite anxious that you should see him as soon as possible; I feel sure you will like him."

"I hope so, most sincerely," said Mrs. Dorrington; and the party arose, put on their things, and taking a very affectionate leave of the good Vicar, and wishing him a pleasant journey—all the three London friends giving him a hearty invitation to town—they took their leave.

The Vicar and Farmer Greatorex were on horseback by an early hour in the morning. Jeremiah Gould was bent on a long day's ride,

and as the weather was warm, he wished to make a stage or two in the freshness of the morning, that he might lie by in the heat of the day, and then pursue his way in the evening. He was mounted on a good steady horse of Greateorex's, full of bone and muscle, and capable of keeping up with good usage and not too hard riding, which he was not likely to have under the worthy Vicar, for a journey of many days.

The Vicar had a small leathern portmanteau behind him, with his great-coat strapped upon it, and thus simply he meant to make his very considerable ride, a ride indeed quite formidable when we take into account the state of the roads—many of them cross-country ones—of those days.

The farmer and he had breakfast together at the county-town, while their horses baited, and then the Vicar rode on alone. As it was the market-day, Greateorex remained, did his business, and was in his usual place at the ordinary at the 'Dog and Raven,' at the usual hour of dinner. There were several of his neighbours there, and one of them said :

"So, our parson is set off down into his own country?"

"Yes," said Greateorex, "he is off."

“And who has he got to supply for him,” demanded another farmer, “while he is away?”

“Why,” said Greateorex, “a stranger to me—a Mr. Blenkinsop.”

“Blenkinsop! Who is that?” asked the first man. “I don’t recollect any of the curates here of that name, unless he’s lately come.”

“No, he’s not from here,” said Greateorex; “the Vicar stumbled on him accidentally in this very inn; and he thinks him a great gun, I can tell you.”

“Have you seen him, Greateorex?”

“Yes, I’ve seen him,” added the farmer, laconically.

“And what do you think of him? Does he seem a decent, likely sort of fellow?”

“Why, I rather think,” said Greateorex gravely, “that a clergyman should be that kind of man.”

“Of course he should,” resumed the other farmer; “but one has a curiosity to know who is going to preach to us; and you seem particularly glum on that point, Greateorex. What sort of a man does he seem? Is he young or old?”

“Neither,” said Greateorex, “he is middle-aged; and I tell you, the Parson, who should

be the best judge, says he is a very famous man."

"That does not satisfy me, Greateorex. I wanted your opinion, and you don't come out with it."

"Ask me the quality of a sample of wheat, neighbour, and I shall speak out, but I don't pretend to sample parsons."

There was a laugh; and at this moment a man, who was also a stranger, sitting opposite to Greateorex, and who had seemed to give immediate and particular attention to the discourse, said :

"Blenkinsop—was the name, Sir?"

"The same," said Greateorex.

"A middle-aged man, I think you said," rejoined the stranger; "rather stout—his hair sprinkled with grey—a fresh, ruddy complexion—a very smooth and bland address?"

"You describe him to a nicety; you know him, Sir, I see," said Greateorex, now in his turn evincing considerable curiosity. "Perhaps you can tell these gentlemen a little more about him than I can."

"He has engaged to supply for a clergyman, you say? Is the place far from here?"

"Seven miles."

“Is he there now?”

“No, he may be in this house, for aught I know; but he must be at Westwood before Sunday.

The stranger wrote down the name of the place in his pocket-book.

“Did Mr. Blenkinsop inquire anything after an opening for a school?”

“He did so,” said the farmer, with considerable surprise; “and he has taken a large house to begin one.”

“What house?” demanded half a dozen voices of the Westwood farmers at once.”

“What house!” replied Greatorex; “what house is there, but Shellcross’s?”

“The hall? for a school?” Astonishment sate on the faces of the worthy sons of the soil; on that of the stranger played a subdued but curious smile.

“I should like a single word with you, farmer,” said the stranger. “I know this gentleman, and I think you can help me to find him.”

He gave a significant look at the farmer, and rising, withdrew into another room. Greatorex followed him. The farmers at table nodded to one another, and said:

“There is some mystery here. You noted Greatorrex’s closeness? He’s a deep one, and has his reasons, depend on it; and this stranger has something by the end.”

All was curiosity; meanwhile, the stranger shutting the door, and going to the far end of the room, said :

“Mr. Greatorrex, as I perceive your name is, excuse my caution, but I see you are a man of sense, and the friend of your Vicar. I will be candid with you at once. This Blenkinsop is an arrant knave and swindler. I am in pursuit of him, and have been for some time. Hitherto he has eluded me, and if I spoke at table what I knew, he would be sure to do it again. I trust to you to assist me to secure him.”

“An arrant knave ! a swindler !” said Greatorrex, in evident surprise. “I was sure all was not right, I felt it, Sir. There was a palaver, a put-on way with the man. I was sure he was not sound; but zooks ! what has he done ? we must be quick.”

“Why, Sir,” said the stranger; “this is his practice. He has been at it for years. He seeks out unsuspecting country clergymen, who want a man in Orders to supply for them. He

gets into the parish, and through the position which this gives him, imposes on the tradesmen of the neighbouring towns. He gets all manner of things, and sells them. If he can get a good large house, he takes it, to open a school. He pretends to pity the hardships practised on boys in boarding-schools. He advertises all the comforts of a home, and a first-rate education for boys for £30 a-piece. He circulates these advertisements in distant parts—chiefly in Ireland. Poor clergymen, and other gentlemen of small incomes, are glad to have their boys placed under a clergyman of the Church of England, with all the advantages that are vaunted of a fine, healthy situation, and plenty of sweet, sound country food, milk and bread, and beef fed in the neighbouring pastures. The poor victims flock in. He gets a quarter's, a half-year's, or a year's payments, as the game seems to go on, letting his bills run on, when he suddenly calls in a broker, professing that he does not find the neighbourhood all he hoped; will remove to the neighbourhood of the next town; sells all off, pockets the money; leaves all the poor lads to the bare walls, far from their friends, and—decamps."

"He does!" exclaimed Greatorrex; "but

what are the dunces of tradesmen about while he is doing all this? Don't they take the alarm?"

"Why, they do sometimes; but then you've no notion of this man's powers of imposition. How he can smooth them down with his plausible lies, and his pious cant. If they are shrewd fellows, however, and not to be done, he pays them quietly; but it is wonderful how he can stave off such things with his saintly look and his pretences. You could not believe it."

"He does!" repeated Greatorrex, swelling with indignation; "he does! Are you sure, though, stranger?"

"Hush!" said the stranger, glancing at the door. "They will hear us. There will be an alarm, and the villain will escape. Does he do this? He has done it twenty times. He has been punished as far as the law will punish him; but the scoundrel is like an eel, and the law like a very coarse net, and he contrives to wriggle himself through most wonderfully. But we shall have him, and give him his due yet. Where do you think I shall find him?"

"God knows," said the farmer; "he's not at Westwood to-day. He is very likely in this

town making purchases from his dupes, if that's his game. But you are right ; if this gets wind, he'll hop the twig. Mark ! Keep you your own counsel. Nobody knows the truth, though some of those neighbours of mine suspecten above a bit. But lie still. Take your station at the public-house at Marley Heath, half way from here to Westwood. He's sure to go past to-day or to-morrow to Westwood. Keep out of sight till night, and then go on to Westwood, and put up at the 'King of Prussia.' Then I'll come to you, and by Jingo ! but we'll have the scoundrel. Oh, laws ! oh, laws ! what a rogue, and to use those poor innocent children so ! But now I mun ride full split after th' parson, and bring him back ; and by this time, he'll ha' got a tremendous way. Mind ! to-day or to-morrow, we'll be with you at the 'King of Prussia.' Till then, lie close !"

The stranger assured the farmer he should only be too happy to observe his advice to the letter ; and the farmer rejoining the company, said :

"Well, it's curious ; this gentleman knows a good deal about our new parson, but I must leave him to talk about it. I have some business."

With this, Greatorrex quitted the room, leaving the law-officer, for such he was, to mystify the farmers at his pleasure ; but once having the door closed behind him, he bolted down stairs as quickly as his stout person would permit, and cried to the ostler :

“ Out with my horse, Joe, in no time. I’ve a house on fire !”

“ Good Lord alive !” exclaimed the man, and darted into the stable, clapped on the farmer’s saddle and bridle, and holding the stirrups, Greatorrex was the next moment gallopping up the street as if he was riding to carry a reprieve at the last hour.

He rode on rapidly to the next stage, hoping to find the Vicar there, as he proposed to halt there to dine, and then push on in the cool of the day. But the Vicar had ridden evidently more briskly than the farmer imagined he would—he was gone on another stage. The farmer took a fresh horse, and rode after him ; before, however, he reached that stage, Jeremiah Gould had had his *siesta*. The evening was set in cool and fresh, and he had again ridden on. Greatorrex felt that there was an urgent desire in the Vicar’s mind for pushing on ; but for Greatorrex there was nothing for it but to pursue, and

overtake as soon as possible. It was ten o'clock at night as he rode up to a way-side inn, and to his great joy saw the thin, grave face of the Vicar, protruded from an upper window, as if enjoying the coolness, and the thrush's even-song, after his hard day's ride. But Jeremiah was so deeply absorbed in thought, that he did not recognise the farmer as he rode up on his tired horse, covered with dust and perspiration. He continued to gaze out over a broad expanse of fields with a dreamy and yet most melancholy look, as if his mind were far away in some very sad place and thoughts.

Greatorrex threw the bridle to the ostler, bade him rub down the poor animal well, and just wet his lips with chilled water, and he would be down again with him. He then inquired his way to the Vicar's room, who, rousing himself from his reverie as Greatorrex entered, stood in terrified astonishment at his presence.

"Merciful Heaven! Mr. Greatorrex, what is amiss? Something dreadful must bring you here."

"Not so dreadful, as rather urgent, Mr. Gould. Drat me, but I've had a pretty ride after you. You must have ridden like the wind. But however, I'd better put you out of your pain.

That Parson Blenkinsop—blame the fellow—I told you I did not like him—and now it's all out.—Oh, laws ! what a rogue surely—and those poor innocent children, my heart bleeds for them.”

Jeremiah Gould's astonishment and terror rose at every word of the farmer. He stood, with his tall, thin figure, and long meagre face, like the ghost of a starved curate.

“Mr. Greatorex !” he exclaimed, in solemn and wondering slowness, “Mr. Greatorex ! what can it be ? What can have occurred ? Mr. Blenkinsop — a rogue — those innocent children !—What children ? You confound me beyond expression.”

Hereupon the farmer clapped himself down in a chair, rang for tea and a good beefsteak, and a cool tankard till it was ready ; and then set systematically to work to explain all that he had heard. As he proceeded, the face of Jeremiah Gould went through as many changes as there are lights and shades in the sky on an April day. At length, clasping his hands, and looking the picture of horror and consternation, he exclaimed :

“Oh, what wickedness ! what inconceivable wickedness ! Is it possible that such things

can be! What can such miserable wretches look forward to? Can they believe in a good and avenging God? How strange! how inconceivable! how dreadful! Lord! give us judgment to act aright! for this is very terrible, and confounds the understanding!"

Then turning to the farmer, he said:

"Ah, my dear friend! you were right—you did not like this man—and yet I could not see it. But what is now to be done?"

"Done? we must be back upon him as fast as we can. There is the officer in waiting for him. He will soon be dealt with."

"But how disgraceful for a clergyman."

"Are you sure he is one?" asked the farmer.

The Vicar was again struck with astonishment.

"Dare the man so impose on me? And yet, so hardened a wretch might dare anything. Let us be off at once."

"With all my heart," said the farmer, taking a good tug at the tankard; "but I fancy my horse, or at least the one I have hired, will not consent very freely to that. He is fairly knocked up. No, we must all have a good rest—your horse as well as yourself, Vicar,

has had a hard day of it, My fegs ! how you have ridden though. We will be up with the lark, which is at this time of the year about two o'clock I reckon, and then we'll push on in the cool of the morning.

Here the farmer, having made a deep impression on his tankard, hearing the tea-things rattle on the stairs, declared he must have a good wash and see to his horse before he had tea. He went out, and coming back as fresh and rosy after his lavation as possible, declared that he had had the horses well suppered up, had ordered the man to be up to "fettle" them well at two o'clock, and give them a good feast, "and then, Vicar, we will be off gaily by three—that I think will be soon enough for you."

"Oh I am ready any time, ready now," said the Vicar, pacing to and fro, "I cannot rest—this strange business utterly confounds me."

"Take a cup of tea and some steak, my friend," said the farmer.

Jeremiah said he had supped. So the farmer addressed himself vigorously to his steak and his tea, and when he had done, "Now," said he, "I feel quite like a giant refreshed."

The Vicar smiled, saying: "Really, my friend, you don't look very unlike one."

“Come, let’s have a pipe,” said the farmer, ordering the maid to bring them pipes, and the primest tobacco in the house. The order was soon obeyed, and the two friends drew their chairs to the open window and began to whiff in silence. The scene was enough to compose any distracted nerves. All was still and balmy. The trees in all the freshness of their foliage, just stirred and murmured in a gentle night breeze. The thrushes were singing their night songs most deliciously. The nightingale was still to be heard in a more distant thicket. The corn crake was scraping away in the deep grass of the summer fields, and a soft fragrance from honeysuckles and sweet-briar somewhere near, rose to them in the dusky air.

Jeremiah Gould, first breaking the charmed silence of the first five minutes of two genuine smokers, said :

“You frightened me, Greatorex. You don’t know how you made my heart beat at the sight of you. Since poor Hinchliffe Delmey’s sad fate, one has been prepared to expect any shock, however dreadful. I don’t think I shall get over it to-night.”

“I’m very sorry,” said Greatorex; “but really, Vicar, you looked melancholious enough

before. When I saw you looking out of this window you could not be in a very merry reverie. But you might well wonder at my apparition, though you looked really like one yourself. I would not have liked to purchase your thoughts before you saw me."

"No, farmer, you are better without them. But I really thought some one at least was dead."

"It was very natural too," said the farmer. "Lord bless me, how people do drop off. One seldom ever looks into an obituary without finding somebody gone."

The parson smiled, but knowing the farmer's style, and that he meant somebody that he knew, he only remarked :

"Very true, and yet this moral death of such men as this Blenkinsop is far more frightful. It is to me a mystery beyond solution, how men can sink themselves voluntarily to such baseness. That strong and violent passions can carry men away from propriety and prosperity, and plunge them down to ruin of body and soul, that I can well understand; but in men whose passions seem wholly under the guidance of their intellect, be it only for evil, that such men who have the power to succeed honourably

and virtuously, shall freely and advisedly prefer to do what is base and infamous—to eat, as it were, dirt, instead of healthy viands, is most marvellous, and past my comprehension.”

“ Ay,” said the farmer, “ and yet you yourself have often told us from the pulpit, there is one way and but one way to explain it—the Fall and the Devil. They may say what they will, Vicar, about there being no devil; but I think I’ve seen a good many actual devils in my time. Shellcross, to wit, and this chap, Blenkinsop; and if they’re devils, depend on it, there’s an old fayther on ’em. Men, with their eyes open, will not go wilfully over a precipice; they’re blinded and bewitched by the Old One, or they would not be such fools. What says the Book of Books, eh, Mr. Gould? ‘ The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?’ ”

“ You have just hit it, my dear friend,” said the Vicar, sighing deeply. “ It is an old mystery—old nearly as the world; we cannot cease to wonder at it, it is so confounding to all common sense; we can only suffer and strive against it.”

The farmer looked at the Vicar, as he sate with his eyes closed, leaning in a great old chair,

and drawing some strong draughts of smoke from his pipe. There was an air of such deep suffering, and yet of such deep submission to it, as the will of God, that the eyes of the stout yeoman were suddenly filled with tears ; he gave forth a great, slow stream of smoke, took a draught again from his tankard, and after a short silence, said :

“ Come, Mr. Gould, we are doing one another no good. Let’s off to bed, and pray try to sleep a bit, for I shall call you punctually at half-past two.”

The Vicar rousing himself from his reverie, said:

“ You are right, Greatorex, we must be active, and not give way too much to thinking.”

They shook hands, and retired.

At two the farmer was up ; knocked up the soundly sleeping ostler, whose whereabouts he took care over-night to ascertain ; saw the horses rubbed down and fed. Went in and heated some coffee himself that had been set ready ; called the parson to a minute, and as the clock struck three they were mounted, and trotting away. It was a fine, fresh morning. The larks were already high in the air, pouring out their joyous music ; the dew lay in silvery

abundance on the grass ; the wild rose, and the elder-flowers, greeted the travellers from the green and dewy hedges, and they rode on through the quiet country with its light mists floating here and there over the meadows, and gazing on the distant cheering lights of the eastern sky, in lighter and more buoyant mood.

“ I’ve been thinking, Vicar,” said the farmer, “ that it were a good deed to go directly to the Bishop about this chap, Blenkinsop.”

“ To the Bishop ?” said Jeremiah Gould, somewhat startled at the proposition.

“ Yes,” continued Greatorex, “ we are just in the way now. We can make Eccleshall in our course without going five miles round ; and don’t you think it would be as well to carry the news of this affair yourself to the your dioshisan, as for it to come transmogrified a good deal, may be, from others ? Nothing like taking time by his top-knot, as the proverb says. Drat it ! I would not have some envious tittle-tattler be saying to the Bishop : ‘ Have you heard what sort of man the Vicar of Westwood puts into his pulpit ?’ No, blame me, if I would not be the first to tell him myself. Besides, this bum-bailif, or whatever he is, says it is no such easy

matter, sometimes, to eject this oily, mealy-mouthed chap from a pulpit that he once gets into; and an order from the Bishop would be the thing for the job if he turns restive, as I should not wonder."

"Dear me," said Jeremiah Gould, looking very hot and flustered, "you are perfectly right, my friend; but did the officer say that this vile man sometimes made opposition to quitting his temporary appointment?"

"He's done it more than once," said the farmer. "The man tells me it is like drawing a badger to get him out; and that sometimes they have had to pay him a good round sum to take himself off."

"You amaze me!" said the Vicar; "you amaze me beyond bounds. How unaccountable! I should have thought he would have shrunk away with shame."

"Oh! that's what he's just eaten, and wiped his mouth after, according to what I hear," said the farmer.

"Then we'll to the Bishop at once. The man must be dealt with."

The two friends trotted on vigorously. It was only about seven o'clock as they entered the little quiet town of Eccleshall. Having break-

fasted, it was still but eight, and they strolled out through the old-fashioned place, wondered at the fine old groves about the ancient palace, formerly a stout feudal castle; saw an old cottager taking his early pipe amongst his cabbages, and had a long talk with him on the neighbourhood and its concerns; the farmer much edified by the discussion of crops, rents, and the ways of cultivation there. At nine, the two travellers, who had been astir for six hours, thought they should be able to see the Bishop. As they walked up the grand old avenue, and approached the stately old episcopal palace, lying so aristocratically amid its finely shaven lawn, and trees of a magnificent growth and remarkable antiquity, the farmer nodded knowingly to the Vicar, who was looking as grave as if he were about to preach in Westminster Abbey, and said:

“A snug nest, eh! Vicar? A comfortable location and an easy life here. And yet, I warrant, these Blinkinsops contrive to disturb the quietness of even these old places, quiet as they seem.”

The Vicar nodded his assent, but did not open his lips, which seemed sealed with the gravity of the occasion of appearing in so right reverend a

presence. They rang at the palace gate, and a fine young fellow in violet livery opened it. The Vicar inquired if his Lordship were in?

"In, certainly!" said the man, "for he is not yet down. Pray what is it you want?"

"We have a pressing matter," replied Jeremiah Gould. "We have ridden nearly thirty miles this morning. It is a matter of the greatest importance."

The man, who coolly surveyed the speaker, and saw plainly that he was a country clergyman, and that his companion was a farmer, probably supposing it some affair of tithes, said:

"If you will leave your names, I will mention it to his Lordship as soon as he comes down."

"How soon will that be?" asked Ben Greator. "It may be a loss to his Lordship if I go away; and I tell you, young man, I cannot wait."

This seemed to tell, and he replied:

"Nine o'clock is his Lordship's breakfast hour. I will see; probably he may be now down." Returning, he bade them come in, and showed them into a large, well-furnished library, where placing them chairs, he said his Lordship would be with them directly.

Here sate our two friends for at least half an hour, the farmer thinking how easily these great folks took it, and Jeremiah Gould reading the backs of the well-bound books in silence. At length the door opened, and a tall, grave-looking man of apparently sixty, with a fresh complexion, and hair still dark and abundant, and in his black collarless coat and little silk apron, returned their bows with a gentle bend, and a very quiet inquiry to what he owed the honour of that visit.

Jeremiah Gould mentioned his name and incumbency, at which the face of the Bishop brightened up, and he said :

“ Oh ! Mr. Gould, I now perfectly recollect you. Pray be seated, farmer ; and let me know, in what I can assist you.”

Jeremiah Gould here briefly explained the occasion of this visit. As soon as he had done, the Bishop, who was standing with his back against the mantelpiece, raised himself up to his full height, and burst into a fit of the heartiest laughter. Both the Vicar and his companion were astonished. The farmer had never had an idea of a Bishop in a fit of laughter. It was astounding. At length, the prelate having exhausted his merriment, and having

exclaimed : “ What, Blenkinsop again !” assumed a grave and severe look, and turning to the confounded Vicar, said :

“ Do you know, Sir, that I could punish you severely for this ? Do you know that you have committed a very grave offence in admitting to your pulpit one of the vilest and most disgusting of impostors ?”

“ But how could I know it, my Lord ?” exclaimed the alarmed Jeremiah Gould.

“ Know it !” cried the Bishop. “ Why the fellow is so notorious, that I did not think there was a nook so obscure that he could have played off his tricks in it again.”

“ But he is a clergyman, surely ?” replied the Vicar.

“ A clergyman he certainly is,” replied the Bishop, “ but a clergyman stripped of his gown—expelled from all service in the Church ; and branded as a pest to society, and a disgrace to his sacred calling. But did you ask for his certificate ?”

Here the disconcerted Vicar replied :

“ No, I certainly did not. How could I suspect ? The man was so fair, spoke so feelingly and benevolently, I should have felt it an insult to ask for a sight of his certificate ?”

Here the Bishop burst once more into the heartiest laughter, saying :

“I think, Mr. Gould, the next time you want assistance from a brother clergyman, you will ask for a sight of that very necessary document. You would have found that Blenkinsop has no such thing, and you would have saved yourself this annoyance. Well, you are not the first whom the arch-rogué has imposed on. I really feel for you ; and I am sure it will be a warning. Depend upon it, Mr. Gould, that when we wonder at the success of these scoundrels, we should wonder, too, at the negligence of ourselves. If we took proper precautions, the career of such knaves would be very short.”

The Vicar bowed his full approbation, and the farmer suddenly exclaimed :

“Drat me, but his Lordship is quite right !”

“But, where is this man?—is he at Westwood parsonage at this moment ? I suppose you cannot get him out ? I’ll give you a line that will soon put him to flight.”

The Bishop sate down, and wrote a single line, which he sealed up and gave to the Vicar, addressed : “Mark Blenkinsop, clerk.”

“I am glad to find,” said Jeremiah Gould,

thanking the Bishop for his kindness, "that this wicked man is suspended."

"Suspended!" said the Bishop, energetically, "ay, but not as he deserves; he ought to be suspended from a gallows. But," added he, "you are wanting a supply for a few weeks? There is an excellent young man here who is wishing for a duty somewhere in the country. He will be glad to set off directly. I will engage for him to be there before Sunday."

The Vicar made his warmest acknowledgments for the Bishop's kindness, who, on his part, cordially praised his promptitude in acquainting him with the fact, and also commended Farmer Greatorex's zeal in the matter.

"And now," said the Bishop, "you must take some breakfast with me." The two travellers thanked him, and assured him that they had breakfasted already, and were anxious to be on the way. "One moment," said he, and led the way into another room. Here they found themselves in the breakfast-room—a large, fine old room, with the morning sun pouring into it from the garden, and two ladies sitting at table—a pleasant and matronly looking woman, the Bishop's wife, and a very lovely young one, his daughter.

“How very merry you seem, dear papa, this morning,” said the young lady, bowing good humouredly to the strangers. “How you have been laughing.”

“And at what, think you?” said the Bishop. “At Blenkinsop, again!”

“Blenkinsop!” exclaimed the ladies both together. “What has he done now? Has he taken these gentlemen in?”

Here the Bishop related what Jeremiah Gould had told him, at which there was a general laughter, and exclamations of wonder at the fellow’s cleverness, and at whether he would this time be taken; in the midst of which our two travellers having been prevailed on by the ladies to take an additional cup of coffee, took their leave.

“Well, drat me!” said Greatorex, as they were once more on horseback, trotting at a good, round rate, “if that Bishop has not some fun in him, though I guess, Vicar, he did frighten you a trifle.”

“He did, indeed,” said Jeremiah.

“But how he laughed! Blame me, if I ever fancied a Bishop could laugh in that way. Why, I could not do it heartier mysen.”

The travellers had a long ride before them.

They had to call at the inn where Greatorrex had left his horse. With fresh vigour they then pushed on to their own county-town, and thence home. But they had not proceeded far on their way towards Westwood, when they perceived several waggons loaded high with furniture, slowly progressing before them.

“Why,” exclaimed the farmer, “blame me, if I don’t think that Blenkinsop has been pretty quick in his movements. I’ll lay anything that furnitur’s for him.”

As they drew near, they perceived that the furniture was all new, and of a very superior style.

“Where are you going with all these goods?” asked Greatorrex of one of the drivers.

“To Westwood,” replied the man.

“I said so,” observed the farmer to the Vicar. “Who are they for?” again asked he.

“For the new Parson, who’s going to keep a school at the Hall,” replied the man.

“There it is!” exclaimed the farmer; “I knew it was so.”

“What audacity! what villany!” said the Vicar, indignantly.

“My man,” said the farmer, “stop your team—turn back with your goods, and thank your

stars that you met with us. This is the parson of Westwood, Mr. Gould ; that Blenkinsop is a blackleg !”

The driver stared in amazement and incredulity ; but he cried “Wo !” to his horses, and then said : “You’re joking, master, ar’nt you ?”

“No, the d—l, not a bit of it,” said the farmer. “The fellow, I tell you, is a humbug ; and if you deliver your goods, you are done.”

“It is quite true,” added the Vicar, “turn home, my man, as fast as you can.”

The man, on hearing this, shouted to the others before him on the road. There was soon a halt and a consultation ; but some of the drivers knew the farmer, and the parson, too, by sight, and they thanked them, and turned their horses homewards.

“The fellow has been expeditious,” said Greatorrex, “upon my word ! But see ! there are more dupes a-head.”

They trotted on, and soon came up with fresh carts. There was a load of beds, mattresses, and the like. There was another of carpets and drapery, and still farther in advance was a light spring cart, spinning along with a stock of choice wines and spirits. The worthy

Vicar was more and more lost in astonishment—the farmer expressed his wonder at the fellow's extraordinary activity.

It was quite late as they entered Westwood. The houses in the village seemed locked in sleep with their inhabitants. All was silent except the hum of the cockchafer in the lofty and umbrageous limes, and all dark, except one gleam from the windows of the 'King of Prussia.' Thither the farmer and Vicar rode up, and knocking, as they sate on their horses, inquired for the stranger who was waiting there for them. The officer speedily made his appearance, and assured them that he had followed Blenkinsop thither. That he was comfortably asleep, he had no doubt, at the parsonage; but that he suspected that the farmers they had seen at the inn had created some suspicion, for the rogue had locked up the gates and doors early, and taken the keys to his chamber with him. The landlord here joined in, and said that Mr. Toby had been very uneasy all day—he was sure there was something not right about the man, he was so suspicious and domineering. He had been eating and drinking in a way that had amazed the trusty servant and his wife. He had been down into the cellar examining the Vicar's wines, and helping him-

self to his best Château Margaux, Liebfrauenmilch, and old port. Having feasted like an alderman, and drunk like a fish, he had locked up the house and gone to bed.

"I just slipped over the back-wall to inquire how Mr. Toby was going on," said the landlord; "and, Lord bless you! he is close prisoner in his chamber, poor man."

The Vicar and farmer turned their horses into the landlord's stables, and the whole group marched off to the Vicarage.

"We must be wide awake," said the farmer; "he is a sly fox and an old stager, and will slip through our fingers, if we don't mind."

"He'll not escape so easily," said the landlord: "we've posted those all round the village that won't let him pass."

"Drat it!" said the farmer, "why, I thought everybody was fast asleep."

"No, no," added the landlord; and they now drew close to the Vicarage wall. The gate of the garden was safe locked.

"This way," said the landlord. "We can't scale the holly-hedge; we must over the wall at the back of the garden—I've left the ladder there."

They were soon all over the wall, and the farmer gave a jolly ring at the door-bell. Mr. Toby instantly appeared at the window quite dressed, but in his night-cap.

“Who’s there?” he demanded; and half-a-dozen voices at once replied:

“Your master, Toby! your master! Come down, and let us in.”

“Oh, laws! oh, laws!” exclaimed poor Mr. Toby; “I’m locked in here—I am a close prisoner.”

“Ring the bell again,” said the farmer, and the landlord gave another lusty pull. The dogs were now yelling in full chorus. There was noise enough to raise the dead, but no Blenkinsop was visible.

“Where does that villain sleep?” said Greatorex; and Toby screamed, as if frantic:

“In master’s own room—in master’s own bed! Oh! the black villain!”

“Give me the ladder,” said the farmer, rearing it against the Vicar’s chamber-window. “Mount, landlord—you are nimble,” said he; “knock in the casement—force your way in, and seize the rogue.”

At this moment the casement opened, and a white nightcap was thrust forth, and a voice

demanded, "Who's there? Mind, I shall fire, if any attempt to come in here!" and a gun-muzzle was simultaneously protruded from the casement.

"I'm here! the Vicar!" cried Mr. Gould, trembling with agitation and indignation. "Come down, worthless man! Come down, and get you away."

"What is all this?" asked the imperturbable Blenkinsop. "It is a trick—the Vicar is gone a long journey—these are thieves! thieves! Take heed—I am going to fire."

"Come down, worthless man—come down," cried the Vicar. "Here is the command of the Bishop. Come down, you vile imposter—are you not ashamed?"

There was a momentary pause, and during this the landlord had crept up the ladder, sprang at a bound into the room, but quickly appeared again at the window, crying:

"Look out! The rascal is off! He has locked the door behind him."

There was a rapid rush to the back of the house, but nothing could be perceived. The landlord was again on the ground, reared the ladder to Mr. Toby's window, and allowed him to come down. They kept strict guard, be-

lieving the fellow was still in the house below, watching to effect his escape; but presently a loud shout in the outskirts of the village assured them that the fugitive was there arrested, and they all hurried off in that direction. The nearer they drew, the louder the clamour became. There were men running from all quarters, joined by women and children. It was evident the whole village had been on the watch. Presently they saw a dense crowd near Farmer Greatorrex's yard—the din of voices was loud and eager—but they could hear above all cries of “Knock him on the head! Tear him limb from limb! Drown him in the horse-pond!”

The farmer and his associates ran on, shouting: “Hold! hold! mind what you are doing!”—but before they could come up, they heard a deep, heavy plunge, and shouts of laughter, and cries of “Give it him again! Finish the villain outright!”

Greatorrex was only able to burst through the infuriated crowd, by his vast strength and weight, when he saw a something floating in the pond, and two or three great fellows dragging and kicking at it. In another instant, he sent these, by vigorous pushes, to the right and left,

plunging headlong in the pond, and seized the mass of struggling humanity in his arms, and bore it to land. It was Blenkinsop, sure enough, but more than half-dead, and his clothes torn to ribbons on his back.

With difficulty the incensed throng were compelled to stand back, and the culprit, panting and pouring deluges of water from mouth and nose, was handed over to the officer, and guarded by Greatorrex and a few others to the inn. The officer did not wait for daylight to carry off his prisoner in a post-chaise to the county-town.

Such was the unfortunate upshot of the attempt of the unsuspecting Jeremiah Gould to obtain a clerical substitute in his absence. It may be imagined what a sensation it created, not only in the village, but in the country round. At the Dene it would be difficult to say whether there was more amusement at the ludicrous side of the adventure, indignation at the base villany of the impostor Blenkinsop, or sympathy for the mortified Vicar. The good man was dreadfully cast down; but the young curate, sent by the Bishop, duly appeared. The worthy Vicar once more took his leave of the friends at the Dene and of his parish, and went on his

journey ; and in a few days afterwards the company at the Dene also departed, leaving a beautiful bright spot in the memory of Mrs. Dorington and her family, and carrying away with them remembrances as delightful and endearing.

CHAPTER IX.

THE bright sunshine of the Khesteven visit lingered long on the Dene. The ties of affection and friendship had been greatly strengthened between various parties. It was a constant source of pleasure to Mrs. Dorrington as she strolled through her gardens and grounds, that there her dear Hetty Harrison had been with her, and to recal the conversations that they had enjoyed in different spots. These were frequent topics also between Grace and her father, and it was a peculiar satisfaction to her not only to see the high esteem which Mr. Khesteven, with his knowledge of the world, had during that time acquired for her father, but also to know how well the brother and sister, her father and

Madam Van Orren, had come to understand each other.

They had always been on affectionate terms, but now there seemed a new alliance, based on their religious feelings, to have sprung up, and to have produced a more intimate and endearing link between them. Mr. Dorrington, too, always reverted to the visit with profound pleasure. He had greatly admired the shrewd sense and extensive experience of Mr. Khesteven, and was all the more flattered by the respect and esteem which the old gentleman evinced towards him. Mr. Khesteven was repeatedly saying to his daughter during his visit and long afterwards: "Well, dear child; I do most thoroughly approve the choice of our dear Grace. Mr. Dorrington is a fine, manly fellow. So much sound sense and professional knowledge, so much the man of business, and yet of the country gentleman. I like him extremely; he will do, child, he will do well, take my word for it, and be an honour to the country. I suppose in a few years he will retire from practice, and accept a commission of the peace. A valuable magistrate he will make for this part of the country: a most valuable magistrate."

Such were the frequent expressions of Mr. Khesteven, which we need not say were duly repeated by Hetty Harrison, and as duly communicated by Mrs. Dorrington to her husband, in both which quarters they were received with pride and pleasure.

But the clouds had not disappeared entirely from the sky. They continued to re-collect, and threaten storms at Westwood. The trials of Grace Dorrington in this portion of her life were by no means over. The brighter prospects for Francis Delmey which the change in his son Hinchliffe towards him had promised, were completely closed with Hinchliffe's untimely death. By that circumstance, Anthony Delmey became his only male heir; and Anthony was not only of a very inferior nature, but from that circumstance in a great degree, especially where it did not run counter to his own will, under the influence of his mother. His mother, who had conceived a most mortal and inveterate hatred to Mr. Dorrington, and was charged, bosom-full, with suspicions of everything connected with the Dene, did not fail to feed Anthony with the bitter poisons from these sources to the utmost in her power. The baleful nutriment was only too welcomely imbibed. It was easy to induce Anthony to

believe that Mr. Dorrington had an eye to the ultimate possession of Fulbourne. That he meant to persuade Francis Delmey to make it over to him as a deed of gift. That this was the reason he had married Grace, and took such care to creep up the sleeve, as she expressed it, of the old man.

The new league which seemed to have sprung up between Francis Delmey and the inhabitants of the Dene since the visit of the Khestevens, and the death of Hinchliffe strengthened these suspicions immensely. Francis Delmey was almost always at the Dene. It was in fact, the only place where he felt himself at home with any part of his family. At Fulbourne he was an object of hatred, suspicion and insult. Mrs. Delmey did not conceal her thoughts, or spare asperity in the expression of them; and Anthony echoed her sentiments in a quiet, sullen sort of way, saying "he reckoned his father meant to disinherit him, and make all over to Dorrington; but he could tell him that if any man ever came to dispossess him, it should be his last hour, be he who he might."

Driven by these circumstances, Francis Delmey sought only the more, peace and consolation with his daughter. At the Dene there was always a

kind smile and a loving tone that could not be mistaken for mere assumption. His little room was always ready, always supplied with flowers in summer, and fire in winter. His books were always dusted and arranged, not, as is too often the case through the operations of servants—disarranged. A dearer hand was visible in all these affairs. Grace and he read together, and talked together on all their favourite topics of books and religion. If there had been no Fulbourne, Francis Delmey would have been a happy man. But there it was; and there went working on things that seemed destined to drive him to despair.

The influence of Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe was again restored there. Whether he had seen the favourable moment in the removal of Hinchliffe Delmey, and the heirship falling to the more ordinary Anthony, or whether Mrs. Delmey, in her hatred to the Dorringtons, had once more sought him, the fact was the same. There were Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe and his sons once more visiting, with the old familiarity. It was not long before Francis Delmey became aware that the old advances were again being made on his property. The deeds were in the keeping of Darwin and Dorrington—there could be no advance made on their security—it was evidently

done on the secure calculation that the property must come to Anthony. The assurances which Mrs. Delmey was continually making to Anthony, that his father would make all over to Mr. Dorrington, could not be made, it would seem, to Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe, for it became only too certain that he was by no means backward in his advances. Anthony continued his old life, shooting and fishing, followed by his ragamuffin crew from one country pot-house to another; and at Fulbourne there were many jolly guests and a liberal table, where Mrs. Delmey presided, as if there were no bounds to the produce of Fulbourne lands, or no fatal event had fallen on the family.

These circumstances caused Francis Delmey the deepest grief. His quiet room at the Dene was no longer a charmed retreat to him. His restlessness and wanderings from Westwood to Lerk, from the Vicar's to Farmer Greator's returned. His daughter's condolence and affectionate persuasions to leave all to Providence, ceased to influence him. Driven, as it were, by a fatality, he continually presented himself at Fulbourne, and remonstrated where remonstrance was not only vain, but was sure to incite to insult. Here he was made to feel that he had

no longer any power over his own property or family, but was regarded as an intruder and a busybody. The bitterest reproaches on his alleged intention to convey his estate to the Dorringtons, were heaped on him, and he came away from such visits irritated, miserable, and in a mood of fevered yet impotent desperation.

At length a new plan began to develop itself at Fulbourne. He was told by both his wife and son that he ought, if he *did not* mean to defraud them of their property to make them sure on that point. He ought to make it over to the mother and son, with necessary provision for himself. When the old man assured them that he should conscientiously do justice to them all, both mother and son cried :

“Then prove it ! do it at once ! Let us know what we have to trust to !”

To this Francis Delmey was wont to reply, that he would never consent to see them beggars in his lifetime. He would never consent to give up his property to be spent before his eyes. He would, at least, close them before Fulbourne went for ever to strangers.

At this, Mrs. Delmey would utter one of her wild laughs, and Anthony would ask if he thought that nobody could take care of anything

but himself. Such was the wretched state of affairs at Fulbourne for many months. It was a wearing and consuming time to Francis Delmey, which all the sympathy and reasoning of his friends failed to soften to him. The scene then changed : there was another infusion of bitterness in his bitter cup.

Francis Delmey entered his house one day, and found there Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe in consultation with his wife and son. That gentleman opened to him that he had been sent for by his sister and nephew to endeavour to procure an act of justice to them. This act of justice was no other than that Mr. Delmey should make over his property to them under certain conditions. It was observed, Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe confidently asserted, that Mr. Delmey was contemplating a very different, and most unjust disposal of that property. If this rumour were unjust, Mr. Delmey could at once satisfy his anxious family of the fact, by making a proper disposition of his estate. That no wrong could be done, as Anthony was undoubtedly the rightful heir by all laws human and divine.

Francis Delmey received this proposition with silent indignation. Not a word escaped

him. He saw the lawyer unroll a document already prepared for this purpose, and the cool audacity of the design so incensed him, that without remark, he arose, and proceeded towards the door. But his intention was prevented by the celerity of his wife and son, one of whom stepped before him, and locked the front door, while the other locked the back one, and Anthony deposited the keys in his pocket.

At this the old man lost all self-possession. A frenzy of indignation seemed to seize him, and crying: "Man! who made thee a judge and a divisor over us?" he raised his walking-stick, and struck at the law-deed in the hand of Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe, evidently to dash it from his grasp, but his agitation, and a movement on the part of Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe, as if starting up at the menacing attitude of Mr. Delmey, caused Francis Delmey not to strike the paper, but to give the lawyer a blow on the head, which prostrated him on the floor.

Terrific was the scene which ensued. Mrs. Delmey uttered a wild cry, and rushed towards her husband like a fury; but Anthony had anticipated her rage, by snatching the stick from his father's grasp, and striking him with

unfilial violence. The old man staggered, but stood, as if nerved by his outraged feelings. Pale as death, and trembling from head to foot, he cast a dreadful look on his undutiful son, and said :

“ Yes ! kill me ! kill me ! What good now can my life do me ? Yes ! strike Anthony ! strike ! let me die at once ! I would not live. I have lived too long ! It will be a fitting end for such a life as mine, to die by the hand of my—own son ! ”

“ Away with him ! ” shrieked his infuriated wife, at the same moment laying hold on him, and by Anthony’s assistance, forcing him into the parlour, and locking the door upon him. Their alarm made them think it necessary to obtain speedy medical aid for the fallen lawyer. Anthony mounted his horse, and galloped away for a doctor, while Mrs. Delmey, with her usual presence of mind called the servants to assist her ; and bearing the insensible man into the open air, they laid him on a squab—a sort of wooden-bottomed sofa, seldom provided with more than a cushion for the head. Here Mrs. Delmey proceeded to ascertain the extent of the hurt. There was merely a slight bruise near the temple, but blood gushing from nose and mouth

copiously, and the huge stout man lay motionless and apparently insensible.

Mrs. Delmey muttering to herself: "Yes; he has killed him! He will kill us all!" nevertheless most methodically proceeded to wash away the blood from her brother's face, and to bathe the bruised head with vinegar. The outcries of the servants she silenced with stern authority, and continued her operations undiverted, till she perceived signs of returning consciousness. The doctor was not long in arriving, and pronounced that the bleeding was not at all in consequence of the blow, but of the fall on the floor; that there was no danger whatever from the loss of blood, which continued to be considerable. It was, indeed, some time before the hemorrhage could be staunched, and the heavy and enfeebled man be conveyed into the house.

Meantime, the unhappy Francis Delmey, forgotten in the confusion, and in a state of mind indescribable, had escaped through the window, and reaching the neighbouring wood, had thence made his way to Lerk. He rushed into the house of Andrew Harrison as if pursued by something dreadful, and flinging himself in a chair, began to weep bitterly.

“What in God’s name is the matter!” exclaimed Andrew Harrison; but Francis Delmey gave no answer, but by a violent agony of tears and silent grief.

“Calm thyself, Francis,” said Andrew; “calm thyself. It is that wife again? Dame,” said he, turning solemnly to Mrs. Harrison, “oh! what a curse it is to be tied to that woman!”

“Nay! nay!” exclaimed Francis Delmey, recovering his power of speech. “It is I—I, Andrew; I am ruined! I am a murderer!”

“A murderer!” exclaimed simultaneously both Andrew and his horrified wife. “In God’s name, who hast ta murdered, Francis? What canst ta mean?”

“I’ve killed him! I’m a murderer—oh, God! how could I do it! How could I be so overseen, so forsaken of goodness! Oh, wretch! hypocrite! to pretend to love God, and to do this! It is all over with me for ever!”

Andrew Harrison felt a horrid dread run through him. He imagined, that in some sudden moment of provocation, the miserable man had killed his son.

“Is it thy son thou hast killed, Francis?”

“No! no!” exclaimed the trembling old man, it is Coxe Hinchliffe—it is my brother-in-law.”

“Lord above preserve us!” exclaimed Mrs. Harrison; and Andrew stood in stupefied amazement.

“But ar ta sure, Francis? ar ta sure on’t?” demanded Andrew, and he proceeded to draw out of Francis Delmey the particulars. When he had heard the main points, he said: “Be quiet, Francis, thou did not mean it, and it may not be so: he may only be stunned. I’ll run and see. Be quiet, and trust in God!”

“God!” exclaimed Francis Delmey, “oh! there is no God but an avenging God for me. It’s all over for ever!”

“No! no!” said Andrew, “I don’t believe it; but we must know. Wife, see to Mr. Delmey; give him something to strengthen him. I will soon be back.”

And with this he hurried out, and past the dams towards Fulbourne. It was years since Andrew had gone over that ground with such rapidity. And he did not go too fast; for the news of this occurrence had flown, with plenty of extraordinary additions, to Westwood. Mr. Delmey had entered his house, it was said, in a

state of madness, and killed wife, son, and servants. The sight of Anthony Delmey, returning with the doctor at full gallop through the village, only varied, but did not decrease, the tragic rumour. It flew to the Dene, and filled Mrs. Dorrington with the most distracting terror. She commanded herself, however, and hastened up to the Vicar's. There also came hastening Ben Greatorrex, and the three, accompanied by Dan Hardy, were speedily on the way towards Fulbourne, to ascertain the actual truth, and to secure Francis Delmey from himself, or from others, as it might be.

Andrew, at the same moment that he issued from the wood, saw them hastening across the meadow in front of the house. With an instinctive dread of mischief, if they entered Fulbourne under these circumstances, he hastened to meet them, and soon explained to them that Francis Delmey had fled to his house, and what he had communicated. It was well that Andrew met them, or under the belief that Francis Delmey was under restraint, there might have been some serious encounter between such determined people as Greatorrex and Hardy, and Mrs. Delmey and her son Anthony. It was well, too, that the surgeon, at this moment riding

forth from Fulbourne, made them acquainted with the real facts of the case, and that the wounded man was actually in no danger.

The party, relieved by this information, proceeded on to Lerk, to carry it to Francis Delmey, and to console him by their presence. The news, and the sympathy of these true friends, fell like a balm on the unhappy man's heart. He became outwardly calm, and thanked God that he had been spared the guilt of bloodshed. His friends remained some hours with him, and then returned, leaving him there by his particular wish. He seemed to desire the quiet of that still nook, and of Andrew's few-worded sympathy.

But a little time showed that his constitution had received a shock that no earthly power could heal. The sense of all that he had suffered came over him with an overwhelming might. He had been struck by his own son, and in the infirmity of his spirit he had struck another. Deeply did the unfilial act of Anthony sink into his soul, which shed under the sense of it tears of unspeakable bitterness; but deeper far penetrated the sense of his own infirmity. After so many years of suffering, of patience, and of daily prayers, to have been thus betrayed

to anger that might have been murderous. Oh! none but the heart of the child-like Christian can tell the torture of that consciousness. The spirit-sinking old man, whose whole life had been a conflict, felt himself fallen and forsaken—God-abandoned, and abandoned by his own soothing sense of devoted endurance of evil for Christ's sake. The sense of this followed him sleeping and waking. Till then he had been more wronged than wrong; but now his own heart condemned him, not for intentional injury, but for the indulgence of a wrath that might, as he supposed, have endangered a life, and all within him was dark and void of peace.

He thought, in this mood of mind, how much those who should love and comfort him, desired his worldly substance—desired him out of the way. The affection of his daughter and of his old tried friends had not even sweetness enough to overcome this bitterness—it was the bitterness of death! There seemed a voice in his soul, saying: “Strive no more! Give up all—let the billows of the world pass over thee!”

In this feeling he went to Westwood, and opened his heart to his daughter. He told her that he wished to make over all his property to

Mr. Dorrington. He wished to do it, as the weak laying it on the strong, to do justice to every one. He would put into his hands the power to save the ancient family estate, which otherwise, he saw, would speedily flow away into the hands of strangers. He would give the right to it for life to Anthony, paying one hundred pounds per annum to his mother as her secured jointure, and two thousand pounds, now in the hands of Andrew Harrison, at his own death, to his dear Grace. That if Anthony married and had children, Fulbourne should go amongst his children, and if not, should come to Grace's children. For himself, he desired for the remainder of his days only the interest of the thousand pounds which were in Andrew Harrison's hands.

Grace wept with her father, and strove to comfort him, but she could not promise that Mr. Dorrington would accede to this proposal. She knew that this was the fixed idea of her mother and Anthony—that Mr. Dorrington was desirous to secure the property to his family, and she was sure that he would refuse in any degree to sanction the suspicion.

“Then,” said Francis Delmey, “God help

me ! for all will go, and I pray only that I may not see it.”

Grace saw how deeply her father had set his heart on this ; she saw the look of despair with which he listened to her conviction that his wishes could not be complied with, and she resolved to do all that she could to induce her husband to accept the offer. It was the only means, she felt, of saving the property, and guarding from poverty her mother and brother themselves. The true heroism was to brave all evil opinions, and do right. When Mr. Dorington came home she stated her father's wish—stated all her reasons—used all her power to persuade her husband to comply with it. It was in vain. Firm in his delicate sense of honour, as Grace herself was in her sense of duty and truth, he refused to touch the property in any the smallest degree.

“No !” said he, “never shall any one have the power to say that I grasped at the property of others—that I swayed the weakness of an old man, and a father, to such a purpose. I repel from me the very shadow of a basis for such an accusation. My dear Grace, here let your father have his home. Here let him live

in peace, and command what he needs as his own. He is as welcome as if it were his own. Let the doomed Fulbourne go, if need be, and go it must; but let us have peace, and not only a good conscience, but a good character while we live. I cannot do it, dear wife, and I will not; it would kindle a strife and a scandal that would pursue us to our deaths, and leave—for the world is malicious—a stain on our children's name."

The proud firmness with which this was spoken, made Grace feel that it was vain to urge her husband further. She stood silent awhile, and then said:

"Then God help us, my father will not live long."

When Francis Delmey was made acquainted with Mr. Dorrington's resolution, he seemed to sink under it, as if the last prop of life were gone from under him. He was plunged into a long and trance-like silence, from which awakening with a deep sigh, he said:

"I must go then, my dear child; I cannot stay here; I must go and talk to Andrew."

"But," said Grace, with streaming tears, and embracing her father, "you will come again to us, dear father. You will come now and stay

with us, and trouble yourself no more about Fulbourne, and all its annoyances."

"Nay, my dear child, I cannot make my home here; I could if Mr. Dorrington had taken the property; but I am on sufferance. I am truly a pilgrim and a wayfarer on the earth."

Grace saw how deeply her father's soul was wounded, and she clasped him in her arms, and strove to make him feel how necessary was her husband's caution, how cordially welcome was his abode there.

"Ay, my Grace, I know that—I feel that—and I will not grieve thee. I will come again; but now for a few hours I must to Andrew."

That evening, or rather night—it was a beautiful night in July—Francis Delmey and Jeremiah Gould were slowly wandering along the leafy lane towards Lerk. The old umbrageous oaks met above their heads, and the honeysuckle flowers breathed their fragrance from the dusky hedges upon them as they passed. It was getting late, for Mr. Delmey had been and opened all his heart to his friend, Jeremiah Gould, and the good man had done all that he could to console him. When he set forward to go to Andrew Harrison's, Jeremiah had felt as though

he could not let him go alone. He went on from one point to another, and listened to the sad words of his afflicted friend.

There was something in his peculiar tone of mind which greatly impressed the good Vicar. The old man seemed to go back over his whole life, and touch on many scenes with a poetic inspiration far higher than he had ever before manifested. Jeremiah seemed to see as by a glory from the sky into scenes as of a life wonderfully full of beauty and sorrow. He imagined that he saw angels flitting about the path of a pure-hearted, but soul-trying traveller. Even then he fancied that there were celestial wings and soft heavenly footsteps about them.

When they came to a turn in the road, Francis Delmey took his hand, and said: "And now, good night, my dear friend—you must go no further. May God bless you for all your friendship for me. It has been very, very precious. And—shall I say it, my dear friend?—I have a feeling that we shall not see each other much longer on this earth. I feel, Jeremiah, that I am going; and weak and sinful creature as I am, I yet go in sweetest faith in my dear Redeemer's love."

"Do not talk so, my dear friend," said Jere-

miah Gould with strong emotion ; “ you are weak. You have been strongly agitated ; but it is now late. I must see you home.”

As he said this, they came out from beneath the trees. The moon, the glorious summer moon was high in the lustrous and cloudless heavens, and the wild rose in thousands of fragrant flowers stood glittering on the hedges around them, in the dew and the moon’s radiance.

“ What a heavenly night,” said Francis Delmey, turning his pale, but expressive face full towards the moon. “ How pleasant it would be on such a night to pass away into that heaven amid a scene so soft and beautiful as this ! Do you know, dear friend, that I have often wished that such might be my end. In such a place, and in such a form, death is no terror, but an angel of Paradise. Let us sit down for a moment on this moonlit-bank ; for I feel faint, and yet I do not wish to lose this beautiful time in sleep.”

The two friends sate down, and in silence. They both seemed reflecting on the subjects of their conversation, and enjoying the profound beauty of the scene. At length, Jeremiah Gould said :

“ Well, I must return, dear Francis ; and will not Andrew Harrison be gone to bed ? ”

Jeremiah arose, but his friend did not move. He sat gazing full at the moon, his chin resting on his hands, which were both laid on the handle of his stick. Jeremiah started. There was a strange vacant look in his friend’s eyes.

“ What is the matter, Mr. Delmey ? ” he asked anxiously.

There was no reply : and laying his hand on his friend’s shoulder to arouse him, the body—for body alone it was—gently fell sideways, and lay calm in death on the summer-bank.

That night, and but shortly before Andrew Harrison had awoke, it was nearly twelve o’clock, and he awoke his wife, saying :

“ I heard Delmey’s knock, but I have looked out, and I cannot see him. It is bright as day, but neither up nor down the lane can I see any one.”

“ Thou hast dreamed,” said his wife. “ Mr. Delmey never comes so late. Go to sleep again.”

“ Nay,” said Andrew, “ there it is again : that is certainly Delmey’s knock, and no other.”

“ Yes, that is Mr. Delmey, sure enough,” said his wife. Andrew arose quickly, and opened

the window : " Mr. Delmey ? " said he, looking down.

" It is strange," he added, after a pause, as if struck with amaze. " There is no one, after all : what can it mean ? "

" We must have dreamed," said his wife.

" Nay, but thou heard'st it too, didst not ? "

" Why, yes, I could have sworn I did," said his wife.

" But I do swear I did," said Andrew, again looking up and down the lane.

" There is something wrong, wife," he said ; " I must go down and see what there is."

" What canst ta see, if there be nothing ! " added his wife. " Pr'ythee get to bed again."

But Andrew threw on his clothes ; gave no heed to his wife's persuasions, and soon was out in the open air, and looking about him, as if expecting Francis Delmey to come forward from beneath the shadow of some tree. There was no one ; and by degrees Andrew, drawn by a strange anxiety, proceeded along the lane towards Westwood, as if expecting still to meet Francis Delmey, coming that way. It was not many hundred yards from the hamlet that he perceived a tall man standing in the moonlight. It was Jeremiah Gould.

“ Mr. Gould !” said Andrew, in amazement, coming near, “ and Francis Delmey sleeping on the bank !”

Jeremiah stood speechless for some time. Andrew looked at him in amazement, and saw the tears streaming down his thin, pale face, and a feeling of nameless dread fell over him.

“ What can this mean, Mr. Gould ?” repeated Andrew.

“ Death is here,” said Jeremiah solemnly, commanding his emotion. “ Our friend sleeps well after all his troubles.”

“ Death !” said Andrew, “ sleeps !” He dropped on his knees by the side of his friend Francis Delmey, and gazing a moment on his face, he bowed his head on the shoulder of the departed, and a violent tremor shook his frame.

So passed away Francis Delmey from earth and all its trials. It was a death beautiful as the poet and the lover of nature could pray for. On that verdant summer-bank, beneath that lovely moon, amid those tranquil scenes which he so deeply loved, nothing more harmonious could terminate a life so pure, and so full of suffering.

“ He called me,” said Andrew Harrison, col-

lecting his energies after the first stunning shock, "but I was too late—just too late. When he calls me next I shall follow him."

That night the body of Francis Delmey was removed to Andrew Harrison's house, and laid on the bed where, during life, he had so often reposed.

CHAPTER X.

THE death of Francis Delmey was one of those circumstances which are continually calling forth in every-day life, the exclamations of "A happy release!" and yet of "How mysterious are the ways of Providence!" For himself nothing could be more happy. His life had been made a moral martyrdom from one or two errors of judgment in his youth. Yet that martyrdom had tended to refine and elevate, not to vitiate, his spiritual nature. Amid all the persecutions and unkindnesses of those from whom nature demanded very different treatment, he had yet lived a loving spirit amid much of love. True friends and fast ones he

enjoyed ; how much of silent but deep enjoyment he drank in in his daily walks with nature and before God, it is difficult to calculate, but unquestionably it was great, and he died as he had wished to die, on the fragrant bosom of the summer earth, and in the companionship of a kindred spirit. For him nothing could be better, for on earth there was no prospect of rest or peace.

But in every other point of view the case was singular. His beloved daughter had desired to settle near him to render his life as comfortable as possible. The duration of this mission of love was thus quickly terminated. His son Hinchliffe, so soon as he repented of his conduct towards his father, and manifested an earnest disposition to live honourably and usefully, was cut off, and they who were bent on ruining his estate and name were left in the sole possession of both. His wife had prayed that he might die in a ditch—and how literally was the imprecation fulfilled ! The very sensitiveness of Mr. Dorrington's honour had, without doubt, precipitated the old man's end, and given the guilty parties everything which he possessed.

The will, which was found, had bequeathed

Fulbourne to Hinchliffe, with certain claims on it to Anthony, and in case of Hinchliffe's death without issue, the whole to go to Anthony. There was no mention whatever of Grace, and this was accounted for by her father having repeatedly said that the two thousand pounds in Andrew Harrison's hands he should bestow as a deed of gift on Grace. But this, though promised to the parties, had never been legally done, and this money, therefore, also fell under the will to Anthony. Grace had never received one farthing of dower, and now never would. The latter views of her father, of conferring all on Mr. Dorrington, under proper provisions in behalf of all parties, had no doubt delayed Francis Delmy's intentions of the deed of gift to his daughter. It was now too late, and Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe, as solicitor for Anthony Delmey, immediately gave notice to Andrew Harrison to pay in the money.

Honest Andrew demurred to comply with this demand. He contended that the money was Mrs. Dorrington's; that her father had told him a hundred times that it was for his daughter, and that he must pay it to no one else. That Mr. Gould and Mr. Greatorex were witnesses to the truth of this: they had heard Francis Delmey enjoin this as a sacred duty on

him, and that duty he would fulfil. So strong was the living evidence, that Anthony Delmey, in a fit of his careless good-nature, said : “ Well, let Grace have it ; I have myself heard my father say it was for her.” But not so the iron-nerved mother. “ No !” she declared. “ The will was the only evidence, and Anthony should have his own.”

Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe, who no doubt was eager to finger the money, menaced summary measures, if there were any refusal of payment ; and Mr. Dorrington, on the behalf of Grace, desired Andrew to pay over the money to Anthony at the proper time, and prevent family scandal or litigation.

Mrs. Delmey, who came into possession of her jointure, found this provided for by an entail of certain land bequeathed to her and her eldest son. This son now was Anthony ; but lest, in case of his decease without issue, this land should go to Grace’s eldest son, she immediately united with Anthony to cut off the entail ; thus putting him into the power to run through even this, as very probably he would.

The void which her father’s death left in Grace’s mind was vast, and to a certain degree irreparable. He was the only happy link with her early life’s memories. To contribute to his

happiness, and to enjoy his society and intellectual pleasures, was a great ingredient in her own happiness. Every pleasant association with her own family was now at an end. There was nothing at Fulbourne but subjects of mortification and sorrow; but Grace had pleasures in her children, and duties all around her, which seemed to drive out sad thoughts, and give relish to existence.

The world prospered well with them. Mr. Dorrington became the head of his firm; his income became proportionably large. He had already repaid half the kind loan to their dear friend, Mrs. Hetty Harrison, and had fixed to pay the rest the next midsummer. He had promised Grace that they would go up to town together, and she should herself put into her friend's hand the remainder of this generously-advanced sum. With this delightful prospect, Grace lived over the intervening time; and many plans of pleasure, as that time approached, were projected in the letters of Hetty Harrison.

Autumn, winter, spring, went over. The money, Mr. Dorrington assured her, was in readiness; and in the coming June, Grace once more found herself in London, amid her old friends. She found Mr. Khesteven, and her

aunt Van Orren, as she thought, visibly aged, but full of kindness. Mr. John Harrison was plodding on in business—grave, still, and considerably stout.

As Grace's visit was but for a week, so that she might return with her husband, and because she was, as Mr. Khesteven said, the Atlas of all Westwood, pleasures were crowded into the space with affectionate assiduity. She had the great satisfaction to pay to her dear Hetty the whole remainder of her loan, and to enjoy long mornings of intimate communion with that most loving of human creatures.

A new visit to Westwood was planned. Mr. Khesteven, enchanted with his former one, was resolved to make another descent, as he termed it, on the country; and Hetty Harrison's children clapped their hands at the prospect of once more wandering through the fields of Westwood, and amongst the dams and wild ducks of Lerk.

The happiness of Grace and Hetty Harrison would have been complete but for one little circumstance. This summer was the Amsterdam summer, and, therefore, the Westwood expedition could not take place. Their friends and connections in that city had warmly and

long solicited that Mrs. Harrison should make the next visit with her husband, and this had been settled. With all their connection with that city, the city of her grandfather's birth, and with hosts of relatives seen and unseen, Mrs. Harrison had never yet been there. She was looking forward with much interest to this excursion in the next August. To her and to her children it was full of promises of novelty and amusement.

“Ah ! my dear Grace,” she said, laughing, “what letters I will write you from Holland. I wish you could go with us ; but as that is out of the question, I shall try to make you believe you are there, and then you'll have the pleasure without the sea-sickness.”

With such pleasant thoughts, long letters from Hetty from Holland, and a long visit from her next summer, Grace Dorrington once more reached home. Hetty Harrison kept her word, and sent Grace weekly letters, which came amongst the business dispatches of the house, and were full of the most amusing and lively impressions of Dutch life. Mrs. Harrison described herself as being *fêted* like a queen. Her line of engagements she declared extended beyond her horizon, though that was a wide

one, for she had the courtesies of a life to pay and receive, and the engagements of three lives, her own, her father's, and grandfather's, to discharge. Her relations seemed to be about three-fourths of the city, and not one of them but would feel mortally wounded if she did not partake of their hospitalities. Then she had other relations in Harlaam, and even Rotterdam, and the Hague, and it was impossible to return till she had been to see them. Then they had all their houses and gardens, and many of them their farms, and famous butter and cheese dairies, and she must see them all. Luckily their tulips and hyacinths were out of flower, or she must have traversed some scores of miles of gardens to be made cognizant of all their wonders, if she had not got doused by the squirting and splashing of waters on all sides, or worn out with travelling in slow *treckschuyts*, and attending slower balls. Luckily, too, the cold weather would be coming on, and she should plead fear of fogs and damps for her children, as she did not think of putting them into tall pattens, like the dray-horses of the sea-ports, and should, therefore, run away from immeasurable kindness with a good excuse.

These family involvements kept Mrs. Harri-

son for three months in Holland, though Mr. Harrison himself was obliged to return to London to business after the first three weeks. Towards the end of October, however, she wrote to Grace that she was really tearing herself away from the thousand and one kith and kin, and embarking for London and dry land. That, in fact, the waters were already rising so fast that she feared her little ducks were not Dutch ducks enough to keep on the surface of it, if she stayed much longer, though the good people protested that it was really the driest country in the world; and that with flannels, and woollen socks, and cork-soled shoes, there was no place like it at any time.

Mrs. Dorrington had read this lively letter, and was agreeably imagining to herself her dear Hetty as once more having set foot in "London and on dry land," and expecting a letter to announce this, when she was stunned by a blow the most crushing, as the most unforeseen. This was the news that the vessel in which Mrs. Hetty Harrison and her children were returning home, had run aground on the Margate Flats, in a thick fog, and that every soul had perished.

The news was too true. That noble heart—that creature of sweetness and love—was gone

in a moment into the midnight ocean, with her three beautiful children and her servants. She had perished on the very shore of her native land, within sound of the guns fired in answer to their signals of distress. Night and mist had made all help from themselves or others vain. With returning light and clearness, the slanting mast-head of the vessel was alone visible above the waters, amid floating bodies of the drowned. Amongst these, that of the unfortunate Hetty Harrison, with two of her children clasped in her arms, and that of the nurse with the youngest child in her arms, were picked up.

We must not attempt to describe the awful gap rent by this terrible event in the lives of all those nearest and dearest to this admirable, though unpretending woman. It was an event so undreamt of and undreamable, so *unlike* anything which seemed to come within the horoscope of so fortunate, so happy, and so sunnyspirited a creature, that when the sable and solemn pageantry of the great funeral, which consigned her and all her children to the family vault had passed, there was left a yawning vacancy in several existences that nothing but death could fill. Mr. Khesteven sank beneath the blow irrevocably, and the next winter saw

him laid beside his daughter and grandchildren. Madam Van Orren, who had been altering fast, was struck with palsy; and though she continued to live on to a considerable age, yet it was in a helpless and almost friendless condition. As for John Harrison himself, that he felt the immensity of his loss is certain. It was visible in his altered looks, and the deepened gravity of his expression. But the affliction and soon-occurring death of his father-in-law compelled him to master his grief, and plod on in his now great and responsible part of head of the firm of Khesteven and Co. He gave up the house at Mortlake, continued to inhabit that in Bread Street, and devoted his time incessantly to business. He might be seen at a certain hour in the morning issuing from his door, and at a certain hour in the evening re-entering it; but no one was ever seen with him, and few were seen to call at the house. In his counting-house, on 'Change, and in the streets, a deep silence and a profound gravity unchangeably attended him. His home letters were distinguished by the most remarkable fewness of words that could possibly express ideas.

There poor old Andrew, himself always few-worded, was now nearly as silent as his son.

From this time he was observed to walk with the heaviest of those numerous walking-sticks which hung in the rack over his kitchen chimney. He gave up his shop to a stranger, and retired to a small cottage nearly buried in orchard trees, where he might be found, either taciturnly working in his garden, or reading in a large Bible, covered with a piece of printed cloth, to preserve unblemished its rich binding. It was the gift of his lost daughter-in-law, and had written on its opening blank page, the date of her marriage, and those of the births of her children, by the hand of Francis Delmey.

We may guess the old man's thoughts, as he opened this book to read aloud to his wife, or for long hours to himself. He was become the solitary remnant of the three friends—three previous to the death of George Parsons in his early youth at Portsmouth; and he deemed now that his only business was to wait the Lord's time. He never was known to speak of Francis Delmey and his remarkable death—and it was rare indeed that he mentioned these—but he was sure to add:

“He called me, but I was too late—just too late. When he calls next, I shall follow him.”

As for Mrs. Dorrington, this was the third blow which death had struck her, through her dearest friends within a very few years, and it took her with such a frightful surprise, that for a time, it seemed to lay prostrate all feeling, and to dry up all tears. For months, nay, for years, the blackness of that time lay upon her with a crushing weight. It was only the love living in her own heart, her sympathizing husband, and her handsome boys, which gave her power to rise and struggle against the deadly influence of that privation. Beyond her home, the ties of all her tenderest love were cut clean away. Father ! a brother ! a soul's true friend—how near and dear never till then fully known—all gone ! how blank and uninviting lay the world without. It required prayer, earnest prayer, and reliance on the goodness of God to enable her to wrestle with her misery, to do life's duties without pleasure in them, and to forget her bereavement in the help of others. But she did it.

Time went on, the path of life must be trodden, even if we tread it alone. Mrs. Dorrington was not alone, though she felt that she had lost a friend, such as life rarely yields once,

how very rarely more than once—a sister not born, but heaven bestowed. Yet she must walk on in a sad steadfastness to duty and to hope, and we here leave her to pursue her way through numerous years.

CHAPTER XI.

WE pass over nearly thirty years, and how stand matters at the Dene now? It is now near the time when Mr. Bathurst made his agreeable journey thither, and found Mr. and Mrs. Dorrington as we have introduced them in the opening of this narrative. Great changes had taken place in that secluded and quiet spot, as in all other portions of the globe in that important period of time. Many who were young in the more recent pages of this history, are now old: many who were old, or even middle-aged, are gone to their appointed rest. Children have shot up into men and women, and have children themselves around them. Yet,

here are Mr. and Mrs. Dorrington still living: hale, strong, and full of the interests of life. Have they had no troubles—no storms? nothing to shake the roots of life in the earth? to break off pleasant branches—to prove the truth of that ancient and sacred assurance that “man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards?”

They had had no exemption from the visitations of humanity. But here is Mrs. Dorrington, no longer the light-hearted and light-footed lovely young woman, but the comely matron, with a heart of youth, and a brow grave, but unclouded: a spirit at once serious and kind. She has grown to a wonderful reputation on these hills, and all round this hamlet, and these pleasant fields. Whatever has been her life as to her own joys and sorrows, she has fulfilled all the views with which she forsook the great world of London and came down hither. She has been the constant and active friend of the poor all around her, counselling in their difficulties, consoling their affliction, affording aid in their illnesses, and securing a sound education for their children. The whole population have come to feel an habitual claim on her; they know her so well and have depended on her so

long, that they fly to her on all occasions, day and night, with an absence of ceremony that would astonish a stranger. Madam Dorrington of the Dene, is a name that is great all round this country; dreaded by the criminal, whom she never spares in her gentle but grave reproof, and beloved and revered by all the good.

But before we concentrate our attention on her remaining history, we must cast a glance at a few of those who surrounded her when we last spoke of them.

Good old Andrew Harrison of Lerk, and his wife, have long been dead. Their property at Lerk has been sold by John Harrison, who still lives in London, immured in the world of merchandise. For a long time after the loss of his wife he continued to plod on, a solitary man in his business, but has now for some years been married again, to a lady of whom Mrs. Dorrington knows nothing. No child of the beloved Hetty Harrison remained; and time has gradually seemed to float away John Harrison and his concerns out of the cognizance and interest of the Dorringtons. It is only known that John Harrison is a very grave and very wealthy man, with another family around him.

Madam Van Orren lingered on many years

a paralytic and helpless old lady. Mrs. Dorrington went up every year to see her, and would fain have had her down with her constantly in the country, but to this the old lady never would consent; she clung to London and to Cheapside to the last. On her decease it was found that she had left to her niece, Mrs. Dorrington, property yielding an income of clear five hundred per annum. She had left this for her sole and exclusive benefit, to be wholly independent of her husband, and to enable her to execute all her plans of benevolence. The will which proved to have been made immediately after her first visit to the Dene, stated, that though Mrs. Van Orren herself had had the most indulgent of husbands, and though she believed Mr. Dorrington a very just and reasonable man, yet she had seen in life so many cases in which a wife could have done such singular good, or could have corrected such sad family injustice, that she wished her beloved niece, knowing her desire of usefulness, to possess a certain means of it.

It may be imagined what a grand fund this had presented to Mrs. Dorrington. As Mr. Dorrington had no need of it, she had rigidly kept the control of this property, which was at her

ultimate disposal. It had enabled her to build a good school-house, to provide many comforts, and the best medical aid for the poor ; and though these objects did not for a time exhaust half this income, circumstances afterwards arose that made it a great comfort to her that she had carefully laid up all surplus.

Ben Greatorex and Jeremiah Gould still lived, and were hearty. Greatorex had now five children grown up ; two sons, John and James ; and three fine strapping and healthy daughters, Nancy, Betsy, and Mary. Jeremiah Gould was still the solitary old bachelor, living for his friends and his parish. His tall head was white as snow, and his hair unthinned, combed back from his face, gave him a very venerable appearance. But his heart was as young, and his spirit simple and affectionate as ever. In all Mrs. Dorrington's plans for the good of the people, he was her counsellor and her companion, and drew freely on her funds, when necessary, or rather, in many instances, after they had had the shrewd opinion of Ben Greatorex.

Mrs. Delmey of Fulbourne, Mrs. Dorrington's strange mother, had also departed this life. Soon after the death of Francis Delmey,

his son Anthony married. His choice was the daughter of a country publican, whose house was one of Anthony's places of call in his rounds of shooting and idling. She was a woman of a somewhat handsome person and a high spirit, but, of course, with little education, and making no pretence to mix with that society into which a wife of Anthony Delmey's property and connections might have entered. She said she did not pretend to belong to the fine folks, and knew they would turn up their noses, and that, still thinking herself as good as they, she should not trouble them with her presence.

It was plain enough, however, from the first, that she meant to be mistress in her own house ; and therefore Mrs. Delmey, her mother-in-law, lost no time in vacating her throne there. She took a suite of rooms in a large, old, dilapidated house in Westwood, overlooking the churchyard, and only divided by a tall holly hedge from Jeremiah Gould's. Here with one servant she spent the remainder of her days, distinguished by the same high and unbending spirit to the last. Mrs. Dorrington made a point of visiting her every few days, and though very ungraciously received for some time, she still persisted, and circumstances made even the hard

Mrs. Delmey in the end sensible, in some degree, of her daughter's dutiful attentions.

Anthony sunk deeper and deeper into debt. He had no family ; yet his property, little attended to by himself, and assiduously attended to by Mr. Coxe Hinchliffe, and his son, now chief manager of his practice, became more and more embarrassed. He came rarely to see his mother ; it became more and more difficult to obtain her annuity from him. Solitary and neglected in her old apartments by her son, Mrs. Delmey felt it deeply, yet continued to dote on the undutiful Anthony. For Mrs. Dorrington she showed no affection—she never went to the Dene ; and if Mrs. Dorrington blamed Anthony for his neglect of his mother, she always vindicated him, saying : “ Poor lad, he has enough to do with his own troubles.”

As time went on, and old age began to pull down her powerful constitution, and shake her with palsy, she might have perished of want, had not the constant love of her daughter surrounded her. Mrs. Dorrington at first offered her money, when she complained that Anthony sent her none, and that she was running into debt, but it was bluntly and perseveringly refused. “ No, she had plenty of her own, it would come some

time, and she would not accept charity while she had abundance due to her."

Mrs. Dorrington quietly discharged her debts, and established an understanding with her mother's maid, that she should have all that was necessary, and supply the house, without taking any notice of it to her mistress. The money which Anthony should have supplied was thus regularly supplied to the maid by Mrs. Dorrington; and Mrs. Delmey feeling no want, rarely asked any questions, and in time came to imagine that she had her proper funds from her son, and even boasted to Mrs. Dorrington how good her Anthony was. Mrs. Dorrington did not dissipate the delusion. So that the maid kept the house going, Mrs. Delmey asked no questions, and her mind was at ease. At length she grew so infirm that she kept her bed, for many months before her decease, and by her side might daily be found her daughter, conversing cheerfully with her, reading to her out of the Bible, or from other good books; for the old lady, without a single reference to her past life, was grown very pious, in her phrasology at least, and thought God was very good to her in giving her so kind a son, who never let her want for anything, though he was too busy to come and see her—

he never came. At length, even she said to her daughter, as she tenderly lifted her in bed, and smoothed her pillow :

“ Well, child, you are very good to me. - I did not expect it ; but you are really very good to me.”

It was a triumph to the affectionate heart of Mrs. Dorrington, that years of filial but unrequited attention, at length had drawn even so far an acknowledgment from her mother's bosom. Tears flowed at the hearing of it ; and years after she had closed the eyes of this extraordinary parent, which she soon afterwards did, she heard those words from time to time sounding in her memory with an unspeakable satisfaction.

Anthony Delmey was still living, deeply involved in debt ; still going his rounds with his gun, and his ragamuffin associates, and looking twenty years older than his sister, who made occasionally family visits to Fulbourne, and maintained a kindly connection of duty where she could not, from invincible circumstances, do more. But she was enabled more than once to extricate the thriftless Anthony from pressing troubles, and to save Fulbourne from the hammer of the auctioneer.

Such was the general state of affairs at West-

wood, and we now proceed to a more particular notice of Mrs. Dorrington's own history in this wide interval of years; only remarking by the way, that Westwood Hall, the former residence of the notorious Shellcross, had now for some years been purchased by Captain Parrymore, of whom, and of his wife and niece, Miss Theodosia Vining, more as we proceed.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. DORRINGTON had had four sons. The eldest died, a boy of seven, and had ever since lived in her heart and imagination, an object of that sanctified affection, which wears its childlike and angelic beauty undimmed for ever to the mother's eye. It is thus that God grants a recompense for the privation which he sees necessary to inflict. The beloved object becomes enshrined in the tenderest affection, glorified to the bereaved mind, and ever present, an angel of joy still smiling on the weary pilgrim of life, still pervading her dreams, still at her side in summer and in sunshine, and beckoning on with heavenly smiles to that

world of felicity, where they shall again embrace in unobstructing spirit, and abide, loving and beloved, for ever. The portrait of the beautiful boy with the golden locks on the wall of Mrs. Dorrington's room, was the portrait of this child, on which the mother's eye so often rested, bringing back bright days, words of artless affection, and the dark and agonizing time of sickness and death, with a force that time never in the slightest degree diminished.

The next son was called after her own family, Delmey; the third was named after the family of Mr. Dorrington's mother, Bulkeley, and the youngest was Vincent. These three boys had been educated by Jeremiah Gould, who had volunteered to become the teacher of them and of Farmer Greateorex's sons; and no man was better qualified, or more zealously devoted himself to the task. The good man was proud to walk out with his five pupils; and while watching their games of cricket, their running and leaping in the fields, or while talking to them of the various objects that presented themselves, was always dreaming what he could do to make them distinguish themselves in their future career. The sons of Ben Greateorex were destined to become

farmers like their father; and the worthy man had enjoined the Vicar not to waste their time too much over what he called the fringes and genteel embroideries of education, but to dibble the substantials well into them. He would have them learn something of Greek and Latin; not that he thought they would ever be of any use to them as farmers, but because he liked to hear their grand sounds, and thought from what Mr. Gould had told him, that there were grand ideas in them, that would set their minds above vulgar companions, and find them a nice amusement in long winter nights.

“But reckoning, Vicar,” he said, “reckoning, and history, and a good grounding in good English language. Those are what I want ’em to have. Dunna let ’em be laughed at as I have been for their countrified talk. Drat it, Vicar, a farmer may just as well be a gentleman, a plain, sensible gentleman, to my thinking, as an ignorant clodhopper. So drive figures, Mr. Gould, drive plenty of figures, and good English into ’em, and leave music and French, and all those women’s works to th’ women.”

Jeremiah Gould concurred in much that the farmer said. As he had the property of a gentleman, he thought the sons should have

the education of gentlemen. He placed them in a classical class with the Dorringtons, but he did not find that they very much relished either Greek or Latin, and, therefore, he did not trouble himself very much to cram them with what it was plain would become just so much useless lumber in their minds; but in all points of a sound English education he laboured hard to accomplish them, and with a very fair success. He taught them botany, and such chemistry as was then become known, and pointed out to them their application to their future business of cultivation. We shall see that Mr. Gould's plan succeeded admirably well with them.

As for the Dorringtons, the Vicar, being assured by Mr. Dorrington, that he designed them all to follow one branch or other of the legal profession, exerted himself to give them all the classical and mathematical knowledge in his power. He also taught them the French, and spoke it daily with them as the key to all the countries of the continent. He pointed out to them what a noble prospect there was open to them in this country, with the assistance which their father's property could give them, and strove to awaken a generous ambition in them. It was soon decided, that Delmey

should take his place in his father's office, that Bulkeley should look forward to the bar, and that Vincent should take one or the other course, as circumstances, or his talents and disposition should indicate the propriety of as he grew older.

How all these things turned out we shall presently perceive ; but than one thing, nothing is more certain , a teacher more able, or more conscientiously anxious to fulfil his important duty, could not be found. Love to knowledge, and love to those whose children he thus assumed the tuition of, made him put all his soul into the task.

Meantime, the addition to his income from these sources was a real benefit to the worthy Vicar. So far as he was concerned, he would have done everything for friendship's sake, and thought himself well rewarded by success ; but both Mr. Dorrington and Farmer Greatorex were not men to consent to anything but a fair payment for any services received ; and Mrs. Dorrington, knowing the simple-hearted Vicar, insisted on adding a handsome sum for certain branches of education for such of her sons as wished for them, or displayed a taste for them.

Mr. Gould's income from his living was

small, and circumstances to which we have barely yet alluded, hung on him with a depressing weight. In truth, his story is a melancholy one, and we may here fitly give a brief tracing of it.

Jeremiah Gould was the second of two sons of a country gentleman in Wiltshire. The elder son was heir to the estate, not large, yet amounting to some two thousand pounds a-year. Jeremiah was educated for the Church, and the living of the village, in the gift of the family, was destined for him. Devoted ardently to the acquisition of knowledge, Jeremiah had studied diligently at College, and had taken high honours. On quitting the University he spent some time at his parental home, and during this time formed an attachment to a young lady, the ward of his father, and living in the family under care of his mother. His attachment was reciprocated, and as the living to which he looked forward was not likely to be vacated for some years, Jeremiah Gould indulged a favourite scheme of a sojourn on the continent. He passed over to France, and remained there till he had made himself familiar with its language and its literature. He then proceeded to Germany, where he again became

a student at the University of Bonn ; studied hard the language, the philosophy and theology of the country. But above all, he became an enthusiast in its musical science. Haydn and Mozart had opened up new worlds, and Jeremiah travelled far and fervently into them. He found strains of peculiar beauty sung by the students, and delighted to join in their *Sing=Verein*. He listened with a delighted ear in the churches to the grand and characteristic hymns of Luther, and especially his

Ein fester Burg ist unser Gott

was constantly on his tongue, and was sung aloud by him in his daily walks in the old forests around the little antique town, and on the banks of the noble Rhine.

Jeremiah Gould passed three years, as it were, in a dream of beauty and devotion. He formed close friendships with several young men, as simple-hearted and enthusiastic in their love of harmony and spiritual beauty as himself. From this dream he was rudely awakened by the death of his father. He took a hasty and sorrowful adieu of his old haunts and companions, and hurried home. Here he found his father had been interred some weeks, and

his brother now in the possession of the estate, of a character and pursuits the most repulsive possible to his own sentiments. He was devoted to the turf, and to the habits and associates connected with it. To him Jeremiah appeared a dreaming simpleton, and to Jeremiah he was a wonder and a grief. His mother had taken up her residence in a village some miles distant, and with her the young lady to whom Jeremiah was affianced.

Jeremiah procured apartments near his mother, and promised himself, amid his books and the society of his mother and his future wife, much quiet happiness. But this was not destined to last. The incumbent of the family being dead, and Jeremiah now expecting to be put in possession, was thunderstruck to learn that his brother had sold the presentation to pay off a gaming debt.

The disappointment, and the horror of such a transaction in an only brother, came down on Jeremiah like a falling building. For a time he was prostrated and stupified. On recovering in some degree, he engaged himself as curate in a distant town, and endeavoured to forget, in the earnest discharge of his sacred duties, the frightful fact that had thus burst upon him.

But a still worse thing was to befall him. While consoling himself that the affection of his Alice was still left him, and that with her fortune, which was handsome, they could command all that they desired in life—that foundation, too, gave way beneath him. The landed brother, in his absence, had not been wanting in endeavours to undermine him in those affections which Jeremiah, in his simple nobility of heart, deemed as firmly his own as his own life was; and though he had apparently made little progress, now when Jeremiah was a portionless curate—and the fortune of Alice was an object of some little importance to the gamester—he renewed his solicitations with such assiduity, representing Jeremiah as an unworldly enthusiast, destined to nothing but poverty and misfortune, and painting the advantages of the union of her own and his estate—that the weak woman gave way, and in a fatal hour made a sudden marriage with the Squire.

When these facts also unfolded themselves before the thunderstruck Jeremiah, he became like a man petrified. The horror of such discoveries of the baseness and the weakness of human nature, as much as the agony of feeling ties which Jeremiah Gould fondly believed were

strong and pure as eternity itself thus incredibly torn asunder, seemed to deprive him of all power of mind and body. He continued for some weeks like a man in a fatuitous prostration, or in a mesmeric trance. He uttered no words but "O, God! God!" and shed torrents of silent tears. News of his mother's dangerous illness roused him to action, and hastening to her, he met at her bedside the faithless betrayer of his affection. The unhappy woman rushed death-like from the apartment as Jeremiah unexpectedly entered it. It was soon known to him that her momentary weakness was punished by a misery that might have given a throb of exquisite triumph to a revengeful nature, but which knowledge only forced from Jeremiah's heart a still bitterer groan.

Jeremiah Gould soon laid his mother in the earth, and the next moment he fled like a man distracted. It was then that he heard of the curacy at Westwood. It appeared a distant and obscure place in which he might bury himself and his sorrows. Here his friendship with Francis Delmey eventually fixed him for life.

And again, if Jeremiah Gould had been capable of feeding on the exciting viands of

revenge, there came ample opportunity. The woman who had betrayed him soon found herself the prey of the most remorseful repentance, and the most heartless treatment by him for whom she had given up her fortune, her faith, and her love. Her fortune only served to stop one out of many frightful gaps, soon made in her husband's affairs. She found herself neglected and despised. A few years and she had vanished from the scene. Not so her husband. He continued to drive on that desperate course which leads through strange chances and changes, and strange delirious excitement to ruin. In a few years he was a landless and a penniless man. And then he remembered his injured brother.

He remembered him, and he sent for him. He told him in his letter that it was a case of life and death, and he bade him come to him as he valued the blessing or the curse of their parents who were in heaven.

The reader will not have forgotten the truly memorable occasion of the Vicar's setting forth—the day of the wily Blenkinsop's adventure—that was the journey in answer to this solemn call. Jeremiah rode on, full of pity and forgive-

ness to the town of Devizes. Here in a small apartment over a shop in the market-place, he found the late lord of Ancient Hall, transferred by dissipation, and the passing through the fiery furnace of turf experience into a haggard and crippled old man. Paralysis had seized on his left side; the ravages of fierce passions and terrible strokes of fortune had made his once handsome face ghastly and querulous in expression, and his thin and grizzled hair completed the picture of feebleness and physical ruin.

As Jeremiah entered his apartment, he saw this startling object; and the eagerness with which the invalid raised himself in his cushioned chair, by the help of a crutch; and the hollow eyes in which the white glared with dreadful prominence, that were fixed on him, almost deprived him of power to advance. He felt himself trembling in every limb.

"Ah, Jerry, Jerry!" exclaimed the shattered man, "true as the day! I knew, my boy, you would never desert an unfortunate brother. I was sure of it."

"May God Almighty help you, brother," said Jeremiah, grasping the extended bony hand, but

he could say no more. He stood trembling like an aspen-tree, and the big tears rolling down his face.

“ Ay, Jerry,” said the wreck before him, “ I’ve been a great fool—the tables are turned—and you’ve got the better of it after all, lad. You need not envy me now. But so it is, there are strange ups and downs in the world ; and it’s all over with me. But it is well that there’s you left, to help me still ; and you must do it. There’s nobody else, Jerry, and I know you’ll not let a brother want. O, Lord, Lord ! what a poor miserable wretch I am, and so strong and so rich once. Well, there’s no help for it. It’s done—and I’m not the first. You must do all you can for me, Jerry ; though I reckon it’s not much after all.”

The unhappy Vicar sate confounded and bewildered. He expected to find an humble penitent, and to hear his brother at least deplore his crimes and his unkindness. And Jeremiah was prepared to pray for him, to console and to help him. But no word of past wrong passed the fallen man’s lips—no idea of his villany to his brother seemed to haunt him : but a hungry, absorbing spirit of selfishness, which would press

out of the stripped and crushed brother the last remains of this world's goods.

Jeremiah was not the man to refuse help, or to remember unnecessarily past injuries. He promptly promised all the aid in his power. It was, he said, but little, but it should be cordially contributed. But he did not forget to speak—with all the tenderness of a commiserating brother he did it—of the solemn situation to which he found the Squire reduced, and to implore him to throw himself, day and night, prostrate and in the dust and ashes of sincere repentance, at the footstool of God, for mercy and restoring grace. But the emaciated libertine listened with impatience to this discourse.

“Oh, bother Jerry, lad,” said he, with a gesture of irritability, “I knew you could preach famously—but keep that for the pulpit, brother. That is not what will help me in my situation. I want help, lad—substantial help. I want wine, and supporting things—I’ve been used to them—and I feel craving and sinking for them: and I’ve no money, but considerable debts here.”

He rang the bell, and ordered some beefsteaks and a bottle of port.

“ I’m glad you are come, Jerry. I am got to my very last shifts, and even my man-servant has left me, because I could not pay him. The ungrateful dog !”

He then began to question Jeremiah as to what money he had brought with him, and expressed astonishment at hearing that it was not more than a hundred pounds, exclusive of what would carry Jeremiah back.

“ But you can send me more,” added he. “ It is worse than being torn to pieces by wild horses, being dragged at and harassed by creditors when a man’s known to be poor ; and I’m not used to it, you see, Jerry.”

Jeremiah might have told him how much he could now have helped him had he not robbed him of his living and his bride, but these thoughts, if they occurred to him, he buried in his bosom, and only told him how very small was his income.

“ Why, it is unlucky,” said the insatiable man ; “ you see, Jerry, that you never had a turn for getting on. With your learning and abilities many a man would soon make a Dean or a Bishop of himself, and then he could help an unfortunate friend. It’s very unlucky for me that it is so, and that you’ve

no more ambition, nor business-like knack of creeping up useful men's sleeves. It is but little that I can expect from you, but that little you must come down with freely, Jerry. I cannot do without it. You see, I've the dignity of the family to uphold—for you it does not signify, because you are buried a long way off amongst strangers, and naturally want little.”

Jeremiah listened with wonder to the prodigal's language, who seemed to be perfectly sincere in what he said, and to have no conception of anything but his own needs, and miserable invalid cravings. Jeremiah promised meekly all in his power; he uttered no word of reproach, where his wrongs had been so fearful; but he remarked that he had not only his own little household to provide, but many claims on him from his flock.

“But what are their claims—what are the claims of mere parishioners, Jerry, to mine? To a brother's, an unfortunate brother's, your own flesh and blood, lad, the son of your own father and mother? Blood's thicker than water, at any rate, Jerry, and you have rich parishioners, I'll warrant. Turn the poor ones over to them. They must not stand in my

way. I can't allow it, and won't, Jerry—remember that—I won't.”

Here Jeremiah's meekness forsook him. He put on a solemn look, and said: “Brother, I will do all I can, but I have sacred duties to perform, and must be faithful to them. Would it not have been well to have reflected on a brother's duty in former days?”

“Do you reproach me?” said the Squire, with a fierce look. “Is that your religion and Christian charity? Oh, Jerry! Jerry! I am astonished at you.”

“No, no!” said the unhappy Jeremiah, stricken with instant and bitter compunction for what he had said, “I won't reproach you, brother, it would be cruel, cowardly now. I will do all I can, brother, depend upon it. You shall never have to complain of me.”

Jeremiah put up fervent prayers to God for the afflicted man, handed over the hundred pounds, promised to send him every quarter all that he could spare, and took an affectionate leave, praying and inwardly weeping all the way home again. The condition of his brother appeared to him every way so awful, so bodily wretched, so spiritually dark, and so impatient of any Christian advice. On his return he

counselled with his friends, Francis Delmey, Mrs. Dorrington, and Farmer Greateorex, as to the amount of yearly allowance he should make to his unworthy brother. They strenuously urged him not to let it exceed one hundred pounds. For some years this was truly as much as the Vicar could spare, and that not without real privations to himself. Had he not such friends as Mrs. Dorrington and Ben Greateorex, ever ready with their purses or their counsel to make up for his deficiency towards the poor and suffering, he could not have done that.

But all that he could send did not satisfy the demands of the bankrupt Squire. He was ever sending for his quarter's allowance before it was due ; ever complaining of new wants, and new ailments ; ever upbraiding Jeremiah for his hard-hearted and unbrotherly penuriousness. Over these letters the good Vicar brooded and mourned in secret. It was only now and then, when the pressure on him was more than he could bear, that he opened his heart to his friends, who invariably tried to harden and fortify him against such unreasonable demands.

“ Drat it, Vicar ! ” Farmer Greateorex would say, “ you are only too good to him. After the

way he used you, bread and water were only too dainty for him. Turn him over to me, and save yourself this everlasting fret. Why, he's a leech—a great, stretch-leather, bottomless leech—the man is. Turn him over to me, and I'll send him his quarter's allowance, and a good sarmon with it into th' bargain. You're too soft-hearted, Mr. Gould, by half, and he knows it. Blame me, if he wouldn't soon come down and be reasonable, if I had him to deal with."

But Jeremiah Gould rather opened his heart to comfort himself with their sympathy, than to follow the counsels of his friend, in this case. Every year he made his journey to see what was the real condition of this unworthy brother, and to contribute everything that he could to his real ease. It was seldom that he had to listen to anything while there but complaints and upbraidings, yet he did not on this account omit a single visit.

And the Squire continued to live on and on. He might be seen propped on his crutches, and drawing his stiff leg after him, on the pavement of the market-place before his lodgings, a tall, gaunt figure, with a hard expressed countenance, bearing all the impress of a broken-down country gentleman of no very intellectual

school. There were certain congenial characters, also well-known, who might be seen talking with him in fine summer weather, and with whom he frequented a certain inn, and indulged as far as his fears of sudden death would allow him.

After Jeremiah received his five pupils, and also gave lessons to Miss Theodosia Vining, the Squire was soon seen lolling at his ease in a comfortable Bath chair, drawn along the smoothest pavements by a man in livery, while for this additional state, poor Jeremiah was besieged with additional complaints, and drained to his smallest coin.

For more than twenty years did the patient Vicar of Westwood bear this burden and perpetual blister of a selfish and gross nature. It was in his own sixtieth year that he made his last visit to his native county, and saw the grave closed over this worthless brother, returning with a solitary feeling, that he was the last of his race, and alone in the world !

CHAPTER XIII.

THE best of parents, and the most judicious of teachers, cannot always mould children into what they want them to be. As manhood approaches, how deep becomes the parental anxiety!—what scenes are preparing often for those who have watched, with hope and gladness, the growth of their sons and daughters—scenes far more strange and harrowing than fiction can frame, or the most sensitive imagination can anticipate!

The young Dorringtons were very dissimilar to each other, and very different, in one respect or other, from what was expected from them. Delmey having tried the law-office, conceived

the most unconquerable disgust to it, and implored his father to allow him to devote himself to agriculture. This was a deep mortification to Mr. Dorrington, who had a high opinion of his own profession, and justly saw what a secure fortune was offered to Delmey in his patrimony and his practice. He expostulated, remonstrated, and eventually upbraided Delmey for his folly in thus wishing to throw away such advantages. It was all in vain—no reasoning nor continued trial diminished his dislike; and Mr. Dorrington gave way, though with much displeasure. He regarded this disposition in his son as resulting from the Delmey blood, and in his vexation did not avoid saying as much—a circumstance that deeply wounded Mrs. Dorrington. She tenderly and earnestly strove to persuade Delmey to wrestle with himself to the utmost, and, if possible, to conquer his aversion to the law. It was useless: Delmey tried, but was so evidently indisposed for the profession, that Mr. Dorrington's partners advised his being liberated from the profitless attempt.

Delmey had never shown more than an average ability in his studies. His great characteristic was good-nature. He was thought

to resemble his unfortunate uncle, Hinchliffe Delmey, though not so handsome. He had his love of ease and pleasure, of field-sports and fine horses. It seemed as if life for him meant only to enjoy the passing day. He rode over the farm, and flattered himself that he was studying agriculture, and the management of an estate. His father regarded it only as a disguise of self-indulgence, and that Delmey relied on the good estate that he should inherit, and would, in fact, idle away life with no real pursuit of importance.

Bulkeley was a very different person. From his boyhood he had been peculiarly grave and, as it were, calculating. He seldom joined his brothers in their amusements, but attached himself to his father. He rode out with him, and became a sort of amanuensis for him. Mr. Dorington, of late years, had withdrawn, in a great measure, from the active business of his profession, leaving it to his two partners, and rather keeping his share of the practice for his children than for himself. He had acquired a sort of passion for legal antiquities, and for all that related to the history and titles of the landed estates of his own and the neighbouring counties. He had, at great cost and labour, collected copies

of such deeds, and of the charters and grants of privileges to boroughs and to families. On all these matters he was an oracle. His knowledge of this kind was something extraordinary, and many gentlemen and noblemen consulted him, and were greatly indebted to him for information on such subjects, which he did not treat professionally, but as matters of courtesy between one gentleman and another. Though he went little into aristocratic society, in the ordinary mode, yet he received numerous visits from the landed proprietors all round, on inquiries of this kind, which he went into with the greatest courtesy and zeal, and with the display of the most graceful hospitality.

Bulkeley had always aided him in these affairs. He copied clearly, posted the private accounts, and by degrees grew into his father's confidence in all his personal affairs. When Delmey left the office, Bulkeley at once took his place, and exhibited the most plodding industry in it. He looked forward to the bar, and the partners prognosticated great success from the gravity and tact which he thus early displayed. This prospect was very agreeable to Mr. Dorrington, because it left the entrance of the firm open to the youngest son, Vincent.

Of all his pupils, Jeremiah Gould conceived the strongest attachment to Vincent. Without showing any personal partiality, or relaxing his efforts for the advancement of the others, he declared that Vincent had the most extraordinary capacity—that there was nothing that he could not learn, and that with a sort of miraculous ease, *if* he should come to show application, but of that he yet did not see so much promise as he wished. But Vincent was very young, and he was full of life and generous feeling. The Vicar wished he could roll Delmey and Bulkeley into one, and then divide them again, giving Delmey some of Bulkeley's gravity and plodding power, and Bulkeley some of Delmey's good nature. To Mrs. Dorrington he was careful not to explain himself farther than this, for he saw that she began to evince some solicitude on Bulkeley's account, as if she foresaw danger to his character from an absence of kindly sympathies. To Farmer Greator, the Vicar had often with much melancholy and in profound confidence, unbosomed his uneasiness regarding this youth, declaring that he had in him the strongest root of selfishness that he had ever seen in so young a person, and that he feared for him. "He will rise," he

said, "but I tremble to think it may not be to a generous greatness."

Time went on. Delmey Dorrington had arrived at manhood. Gay, good-natured, and contented to let life slip on, with his horses, his fishing-rod, and his gun, he had only too fully confirmed his father's assertion, that he was but another Delmey. Mr. Dorrington had ceased to remonstrate with him, having, it would seem, resigned himself to the fancied idea that Delmey was to be a country gentleman, and nothing more. Meantime Bulkeley had been pursuing the steady tenor of his way. He had discharged his office duties with clockwork regularity, and with a gravity and business-like ability that had charmed the law partners, and drawn from them the warmest encomiums in their communications with Mr. Dorrington. Bulkeley had grown, of course, proportionately in the estimation of the father, and his assiduous attentions to that father's wishes and concerns were of the most marked kind. Every day, after the close of the office, except when extraordinary press of business necessitated prolonged hours, he rode home, and was closeted with Mr. Dorrington in the pursuance of those objects which always occupied him. Though Delmey

professedly managed the estate, Bulkeley seemed really to be at the centre, and to move the secret springs of its affairs. He had assumed, virtually, the post of steward and eldest son. Delmey figured only as the farm-bailiff. The confidence which Mr. Dorrington manifested in the one was as unbounded as his indifference, and were it not too strong a word regarding a parent, almost contempt of Delmey and his proceedings, was obvious. Towards Bulkeley there was exhibited, not in mere words, but in all the actions and spirit of daily life the deepest paternal pride; towards Delmey, a silent but not the less real disregard.

The quick eye of a mother did not fail to perceive all this, and it gave to the heart of Mrs. Dorrington many a painful feeling. It was difficult to blame Bulkeley. There was a steadiness, a gravity, and ability about him that might justly excite the pride of any parent. There was nothing on which to fix very palpably any blame. He betrayed neither ill-will nor jealousy towards Delmey; on the contrary, rather kindness, and introduced words of excuse in case of blame. There was, on the other hand, much in which it was easy to blame Delmey, and it was difficult to prevent unfavourable comparisons

between him and his brother. And now there came a brilliant step in the fortunes of the more prudent son.

There was a young lady left in the wardship of Mr. Dorrington. She was of old family, and of large estate. In the many transactions regarding her affairs, and especially on her coming of age, and being put in possession of her property, Bulkeley Dorrington had been, from his admirable address and thorough business habits, very much employed, by his father. The young lady lived, during the latter years of her minority, by consent of her guardians, on her own estate under the care of her aunt. Bulkeley, as not only a good man of business, but as an active horseman had made frequent journeys thither, the property lying in a neighbouring county, at the distance of thirty miles.

So well had he executed his commission, aided by his tall, manly person, and insinuating, though grave address, that not long after the majority of the lady, Mr. Dorrington was astonished to receive his assurance that he was affianced to the weighty heiress, and now craved his consent to the marriage.

Mr. Dorrington's nice sense of honour was

at first somewhat alarmed at the construction which the world might put on this event, but the event itself was too flattering to all his strongest biases, not soon to outweigh all other considerations. Of late years his estimation of landed estate and standing had grown to a wonderful degree. No doubt those studies in which he had indulged, and his great researches into all that belonged to landed property and dignity, had powerfully nourished this disposition. The lady herself was not only wealthy, but of an irreproachable and even of a religious character. The nuptials were celebrated with much *éclat*, and Mr. Bulkeley Dorrington became at once a great landed proprietor. So much satisfied was he himself with the position which he had thus reached at a single and a flower-strewn step, that he abandoned all thoughts of the bar, and determined to devote himself to the management of his fine estate, and to the discharge of the duties of a country gentleman and a magistrate.

Mr. Dorrington paid a visit to his fortunate son with the profoundest satisfaction. The ample estate, the noble woods, the rich farms, the stately and well-ordered house, and the lady-like and serious bride, were all seen and dwelt

upon with unmixed satisfaction by him. Mrs. Dorrington rejoiced too in seeing her son so substantially and honourably settled. Yet she was less enthusiastically so, than her usually grave, phlegmatic husband. What could 'cause this? She was herself deeply religious, and Mrs. Bulkeley Dorrington was a religious woman. She was of an evangelical turn. Her house was conducted with the most exact decorum. All her servants were selected with reference to their religious views and characters. All the movements of her house were marked by the most perfect order, the most noiseless gravity. Family prayers, morning and evening, were most diligently and carefully observed. The attendance at church was practised with equal punctuality and zeal, on all occasions. There was not a link in the chain of domestic propriety, or religious duty, which was not shining with daily use.

Bulkeley Dorrington fell in with the habits and wishes of his wife, as if they were to him the most especially acceptable. Could a parent desire more? Yet it is true that Mrs. Dorrington was less enthusiastic in her congratulations on all this good fortune than her husband thought she ought to be. Such a fine estate,

such a truly pious and sensible wife as Bulkeley had obtained, what could human heart desire more?

Perhaps Mrs. Dorrington required a little more of her own enthusiasm, of her own religion of feeling, of her own mysticism? Could that be it? Or cannot even the best of mortals be, on all occasions, reasonable, or fully cognizant of their good?

Be this as it may, there followed rapidly on the heels of this brilliant marriage, another which stood forth in terrific relief to it—a marriage, which made this shine out like a glittering mountain top amid the blackest tempestuous heavens. That was the marriage of Delmey Dorrington.

Suddenly, without the slightest suspicion of such a thing, without the faintest rumour of any such impending evil, without the smallest reason to believe Delmey contemplated such a deed, there burst upon his parents the frightful news, that he had married into a family which must inevitably involve him in ruin and disgrace.

Far down the valley below Westwood, and on the banks of the Wilder, lived a man of shy and suspicious character. This man who was

well-known as Dakeyn, of Wood-Lincoln, was yet little known beyond that cognomen. He was a stranger in the county. There were various rumours as to whence he came, and what had been his career: he had only appeared as the tenant of Wood-Lincoln farm some two years ago. The place and the man seemed to have been drawn together by a similarity of nature.

On the edge of the moorland valley, and near an abrupt bend of the stream, stood a considerable farm-house. It was of dark-red brick, of various erections, and covered with thick and dilapidated thatch. Around it lay a considerable farm-yard, which, except in the driest weather, it was difficult to approach, from the wet ground being trodden into mud and holes full of water by the cattle. A number of straggling Scotch fir-trees stood about it on the heath, that had run up tall and slender, without branches, except at top; and to which the tearing winds and the injuries sustained by their bark from the cattle rubbing on them below, had given an air of poverty which was only too much in keeping with the other features of the place. The out-buildings were in disorder, the yards slovenly, the carts and implements seen about, of a wretched cha-

racter, and the fences which were broken, enclosed fields, whose rushes and furze proclaimed, that they needed draining, and much other kindly culture.

Such was Wood-Lincoln, to which a farm of some three hundred acres was attached, chiefly of strong clay land, which displayed a husbandry by no means exceeding in point of excellence the condition of the farm-house and premises themselves. Huge, rough fallow, on which clods, large as horses' heads, stood thick amid crops of thistles and couch-grass, thin fields of wheat, and pastures of a poor aspect, and thinly stocked with cattle, were to be seen stretching over uplands, in which the very hedge-row trees had been cleared away, as by some landlord as avaricious as the tenant was negligent.

A more uninteresting place the whole neighbourhood had not to show, and the tenant himself was the least like an English farmer that you could possibly find. He was a somewhat tall, and thin man of sixty, or more. When seen, it was rarely on his farm, but generally mounted on a horse equally lean, and with a thin switch tail. The man stooped considerably in the shoulders as he rode, and had

a shabbiness of attire that at once attracted your attention. His old boots, with tops black with age, his huge hooked riding-whip, with which he pulled open the gates leading to his farm, and his old brown hat a little turned up behind, with being closely worn down in the neck, gave him a look so peculiarly his own, that you knew him at any distance.

As he approached you on his meagre bay horse, you were struck with his face of a muddy mahogany, or walnut-tree complexion, in which a dark pair of eyes were found to be fixed silently, but searchingly, upon you. There was a stillness in his manner, and in the shambling gait of his horse, that struck you involuntarily with a sense of suspicion. You felt as if a perpetual watch was kept up in that man's soul; as if there were something to hide, and something in the world for him to guard against. There was a sad expression, and yet without tenderness—an air, as if a weight and a secret fear lay on the heart within, and amid a hard, unabashable assurance, a consciousness of a brand that separated him from his fellows, as much as if it was burnt into his forehead with the hangman's iron.

This Dakeyn, though, as we have said, he had

no connections in the country, and by some was declared to have been a West-Indian slave-driver; by others a spy, living on the wages of blood and treachery; by others a broken-down gambler; and by nobody regarded as a real farmer; yet regularly appearing on public occasions. He was at the church, the market, and the races; though people instinctively kept aloof from him, or only exchanged a grave and passing nod. He was a keen follower of the hounds, and rode, for a man of his age, with an extraordinary boldness and skill.

Still more extraordinary was said to be his mastership in handling the angle, and throwing the fly, for the trout in the Wilder. It was in Delmey Dorrington's strolls down this stream that he occasionally fell in with him. Dakeyn at first only gave Delmey one of his silent nods, as he passed him on the bank of the river; and Delmey was sufficiently aware of the general estimation in which he was held not to seek further acquaintance. But on more than one occasion he had witnessed with astonishment the wonderful success which this man had. He saw him pull one huge trout forth after another, when he himself had tried all the most noted spots in the stream in vain. By degrees, as he

stood to watch this strange fisherman, words passed, and the ice once broken, Delmey Dorington found a singular fascination in the man's talk. He seemed to possess a most profound and rare knowledge of all that related to field-sports, and told endless anecdotes and stories of such things, with a quiet but attractive power that enchained the good-natured Delmey.

Once, as a thunder-storm suddenly burst upon them, he invited Delmey to take refuge in his house; and there he brought forth wine and cake, and assuming his pipe, went imperceptibly into a conversation which so much absorbed the attention of his hearer, that he was astonished to perceive the sun blazing again through the clear sky, as the speaker made a short pause, when rising, Delmey took his leave.

Others who had occasion to enter Wood-Lincoln farm-house on business, had given the same account of his officious hospitality, and the strange charm and rich resources of his conversation. It was not long afterwards that Delmey was heard by various persons with surprise to express his belief that Dakeyn was a very superior and much maligned man. It was clear that he had gone insensibly more and more into his company, and had become strongly,

influenced in his favour ; but nothing could have induced any one to suppose him guilty of such an infatuation as to have married his daughter. Yet this fatal folly had Delmey Dorrington perpetrated, and in it laid the inevitable foundation of a life of the deepest misery to himself and many others.

CHAPTER XIV.

It is not in our power to describe the consternation which the whispered rumour of Delmey's marriage created at the Dene. A deep calamity seemed to have fallen on the place, though the news was yet too incredible to be accepted as real. But there was, however, an agonizing excitement, and at the same time a silence, which lay on the hearts of every one, as of a terrible fear. Mr. Dorrington exhibited the most intense rage, and Mrs. Dorrington a proportionate grief.

"Where is Delmey?" said Mr. Dorrington, with a sternness of manner, which struck a terror through all who heard him. "Let him be immediately found. Let him be sent for."

In the midst of this Delmey entered the house, with an easy and smiling aspect, as if perfectly unconscious, not only of what was agitating the family, but of any extraordinary occurrence whatever having taken place.

The moment his father saw him, he exclaimed, in a way which evidently made the young man start :

“ Oh ! it is well you are come, Sir. This absurd story is not then true. They told me you were married, and to a person, too ridiculous for belief.”

As he spoke, Delmey turned pale, and at the same instant dropped on his knees before his father.

That act flashed the awful truth on the wretched parents. Mr. Dorrington gave a start, and a terrible expression came over his face. Mrs. Dorrington gave a groan, and sunk into her chair.

“ What ! ” exclaimed Mr. Dorrington, “ is that vile report then true ? ”

“ Pardon me, dear father ! ” said Delmey, endeavouring to seize Mr. Dorrington’s hand, “ pardon me, and hear me ! ”

The tears started in torrents from his eyes : it seemed as if the full consequences of his deed

had only now struck him, there was a look of such intense pain in his face ; but he had no time to proceed. Mr. Dorrington's face became dark, and livid with anger. He cast a look of blackest fury and contempt on the young man, and crying :

“ Pardon ! pardon ! say you ? fool ! idiot ! villain ! I renounce you ; you are no son of mine ! ”

He pushed the suppliant youth fiercely from him, and rushed away. Poor Delmey caught, with an agonized clutch, the skirt of his father's coat, as he strode past him ; but the infuriated father struck it violently from his hand, and was gone.

At this moment Mrs. Dorrington sprang forwards, and clasping Delmey in her arms, exclaimed :

“ Oh, Delmey ! my dear Delmey ! what have you done ? Oh ! you have made us all miserable. You have ruined us all for ever ! Say it is not true ; say that it is not yet done ; that it is not yet too late. Oh, speak ! speak ! let me hasten to your father, and tell him that ! ”

“ It is true, mother,” said Delmey, in a faint and, as it were, half-absent tone, as if he were fainting under a great and unexpected blow.

“It is true—but *you* won’t renounce me, dearest mother? *you* won’t curse me?”

“Oh, no! no!” exclaimed Mrs. Dorrington, embracing her son with passionate vehemence, “no! no, my child; but what *have* you done! What, oh merciful God! shall we do! Your father will never forgive it—what misery, what utter, utter misery for us all.”

“But, my dear mother,” exclaimed Delmey, wild with this dreadful scene, “see her, see my wife, dear mother, and then you will like her! oh! I know you will like her! and you can then intercede with my father. Oh! I cannot bear this terrible anger!”

“Yes, see her! dear Madam, see her!” exclaimed a voice broken by sobs and violent weeping; and a female servant was seen kneeling and clasping Delmey’s knees, and lost in convulsions of grief. It was Sally Horobin. She had heard the fearful words of Mr. Dorrington, and with the privilege which long years of familiar service in the family had given her, or rather, with the impetuous and irresistible force of her own affection, for she had nursed the young Dorringtons, and attended them in their boyhood, and looked on them almost as her own sons, she had hurried into the room as Mr.

Dorrington went wildly out, and stood weeping close behind Delmey.

"Yes! dear Madam—see her! see her!" cried Sally. "She cannot be bad—she must be better than people say. Oh! Mr. Delmey what have you done though!"

And the poor woman caught Delmey's hand, and covered it with kisses and passionate tears.

"But see her, Madam," she continued, starting up, as Mrs. Dorrington still stood bitterly weeping on Delmey's shoulder. "I'll run off for her—I'll go at once. She shall be here directly!" And Sally was hurrying forth to put her intentions into execution.

"Stop!" said Mrs. Dorrington, commanding herself. "I will see your wife, Delmey—it is only due to you, and to us all. But where? Not here! She must not come here. Oh no! Where then can it be?"

"Be! At Mr. Gould's, Madam, to be sure," said Sally Horobin, her tears already dried in anticipation of a reconciliation. "I'll run and tell him."

"You are right, Sally," said Mrs. Dorrington, with a sad firmness. "It must be at Mr. Gould's."

"But stay, Sally," said Delmey. "I will go

and tell him myself; and I will then go and fetch my wife. In a few hours she shall be there."

The mother and son again embraced with tears, in which Sally Horobin joined plentifully, and the young man turned away.

He was not long in reaching the Vicarage. Mr. Toby opened the garden-door in answer to his ring. There was a look as of a startled surprise on his face when he saw Delmey; and he said, hurriedly, and with some confusion:

"Oh! I am glad to see you, Sir. I hope all's well, Sir. But master's down in the summer-house, and Mr. Greatorex. I'll call master if you'll please to walk in, Sir!"

"No, Mr. Toby," said Delmey, "I will go down to them in the summer-house."

The two worthies were seated as in some deep consultation, though it was about eleven o'clock, on a splendid summer morning, and the farmer's people were all busy in the hay. It was a most extraordinary sight to see them sitting there at such a moment. There was no pipe either in the hand of the farmer or the Vicar. They looked grave, and as out of spirits,

As Delmey presented himself at the open

door, both gentlemen rose, hastily, and Mr. Gould, saying : " Ha ! my dear young friend !" stretched out his hand, and shook Delmey's affectionately. The farmer, also, on shaking hands, but in silence, pressed Delmey's hand fervently.

There was a moment's pause of embarrassment ; but Delmey's business was pressing, and he said :

" My friends, you have heard, I doubt not, the news, that I am married." They bowed seriously. " My father is dreadfully offended." Here Delmey's lip trembled, and he faltered, but recovering himself, he added : " I want your help. My mother has promised to see my wife. I feel sure that when she does she will like her, and then all may soon be right."

" God Almighty above grant it !" said Jeremiah Gould, casting a prayerful glance up towards heaven.

" Amen ! amen !" said the farmer, in accents of deep sincerity.

" My mother proposes that the interview," continued Delmey, " shall take place here—if quite agreeable to you, Sir," addressing Mr. Gould particularly.

" Oh, sure !" interrupted Mr. Gould. " Oh,

with all my heart and soul, and God grant His blessing on the meeting !”

“Amen ! and double Amen !” said the farmer, once more.

“I am well aware,” added Delmey, somewhat proudly, “that there exists a strong prejudice against Christina’s father ; but I am convinced that it is unjust.” The farmer shook his head. “But if it were well grounded,” continued Delmey, “why should that affect his innocent child ?”

“No, truly,” said Jeremiah Gould, sadly.

“Bad crow, bad egg,” said the farmer. “Mr. Delmey, you know the proverb, and it will stick. God grant that in this case it may not be true. I should be very sorry to make you more uneasy than I know you must be, Mr. Delmey ; but I must candidly tell you that I don’t like that man, your new father-in-law. He’s a look—good Lord above ! I know not how it is, but it always gives me a feeling like what I had when I seed th’ tigers i’ th’ Tower at Lunnun. There’s something so sly and still, with his eyes half-open, and his cat-like watching way. I dunna like it—it makes my blood creep. May God forgive me if I do him wrong !”

“If you knew him better,” said Delmey, “you’d alter your opinion. He is a man of very great sense and intelligence, and has seen a great deal of the world.”

“Too much, I should fear,” said the farmer; “but as to his daughter—that’s neither here nor there; and, drat me! Mr. Delmey, if I wouldn’t give my best acre to find her worthy of you and your excellent family. I’d set all th’ bells ringing, I would—and all would soon be right. But any how,” added the farmer, “you’ll find staunch friends here,” giving Delmey a powerful grasp of the hand; “and the more so, if you should need ’em.”

Delmey returned the generous pressure of the farmer’s ample hand, but could not speak. Greatorrex nodded, as much as to say, “Well, you’ve your matters to arrange,” and went away as fast as he could. It was fixed that Delmey should meet his mother there at two o’clock, and Mr. Toby was sent down to inform Mrs. Dorrington of the hour.

A little before that hour, Mr. Delmey and his young wife were seen passing on horseback through the village, at a rapid pace. The bride was closely veiled, so that no one could get a clear view of her face, but all exclaimed,

as they hurried to their doors, "What a handsome little figure! Really, how ladylike! and how well she rides!"

Though Dakeyn himself was very well known by sight in Westwood, very few people knew anything of his daughter. Many, indeed, did not know that he had a daughter at all. Wood-Lincoln was in another parish, and Dakeyn and his daughter, of course, attended their own parish church. The daughter was very little seen anywhere, and in Westwood had scarcely ever set foot.

When Mrs. Dorrington entered the parlour of Jeremiah Gould, pale and agitated, the two young, newly-married people rose to meet her, and she saw standing before her a singular contrast—her son's open English look and fair complexion, and the dark and Indian complexion of his wife. Mrs. Dorrington was evidently much struck with the appearance of her daughter-in-law. She was of a small, but exquisitely-moulded figure. There was a grace and spirit about her, that bespoke her at once as no ordinary farmer's daughter. Mrs. Dorrington gazed on her with astonishment. Her face was formed in the finest mould of Creole beauty. Her features were delicately cut, yet *prononcé*

in expression. Her complexion was of a warm and dark, yet most clear and bright character. Her large dark-brown eyes flashed with the fervour of tropical suns, and her strongly-pencilled eyebrows and fine eyelashes, black as jet, added to their ardent expression.

There was a pride in her glance and bearing, which, though mingled with an evident anxiety, did not escape Mrs. Dorrington's deeply-interested gaze. She did not wonder, after the first view of this remarkable person, at the simple and generous mind of Delmey being fascinated with her. Mrs. Dorrington advanced to her, and embracing her, gazed a moment in her face, and then kissed her on the forehead.

"My daughter!" she said—and again gazed in her large dark eyes, with a sort of speechless wonder.

Both Delmey and his wife knelt before their mother, and, with tears in their eyes, kissed her hands, and implored her blessing and her love. Mrs. Dorrington, deeply agitated, clasped them both in her arms, wept, overpowered by emotion, and then said, in a solemn and trembling voice:

"May God in His goodness bless you, and give you, and all of us, peace and union.

But, my children, you have done wrong—very, very wrong—and I fear it will be long before Mr. Dorrington will forgive you this rash and sad act.”

There was a flash of wounded pride in the eyes of the bride. She wiped away her tears, and standing with an air of haughty loveliness, she said :

“ I know, Madam, that my entrance into your family is not acceptable. I am well aware of the dislike which is shown to my father in this country. Why did he return to it? Why does he not quit it? This world is wide—and there is respect for misfortune in every land but this purse-proud island. In Trinidad my blood, Madam, can match with yours, or perhaps still higher. From my mother, I draw Spanish blood of the purest blue. There is still wealth of no trivial amount in our family, some of which may yet one day be mine. Know then, Madam, that I admit no inferiority to your son—no degradation on his part in this alliance.”

Mrs. Dorrington gazed with an earnest eye at her daughter-in-law—a totally different being was before her to what she had expected, or that she could have formed any conception of. Her glance then passed on to Delmey, and she

saw him stand with his looks rivetted in proud admiration on his wife, and as if sympathising intensely in her injured feelings. Mrs. Dorring-ton rose, and taking a hand of each, drew them to the sofa, where she placed one on each side of her, and looked on them with a smile of melancholy affection, and through streaming tears.

“Excuse us, my dear daughter,” she said, looking on her tenderly: “we are all sadly out of tune. This thing has taken us by surprise, and we are not ourselves. God give us composure, and charity with one another. I am glad to hear what you say, that in your own country your family is so respectable. It will do much to reconcile matters. And it must be so—I see and feel that you are of no ordinary stock. God has given you singular beauty, and a high spirit. Oh, be thankful, dear child, and be watchful—watchful over that proud Spanish temperament, which may, otherwise, cause you much unhappiness. We must be careful—we shall need much wisdom, and forbearance with each other; but in me, you will ever find a mother and a friend.”

The passionate daughter of the torrid West, here, with the sudden impetuosity of her nature,

flung herself into Mrs. Dorrington's arms, and kissing her with transports of tears, vowed that she would love and honour her as her own dear and deceased parent. By degrees the three grew more calm, and conversed on many things connected with this strange event—what had led Christina's father to Trinidad, what brought him hither again, and how Delmey had become acquainted with her.

All this Christina related with vivacity and a feeling that deeply impressed Mrs. Dorrington. She could see what a glowing, impassioned creature she was. She spoke of her mother with a devotion that amounted to the highest poetry of passion and affection. As she drew her portrait, she was a person of dazzling beauty, of queenly presence, of the most ardent affections. She described her father evidently with a more artful pencil. He had gone over to the West Indies as the manager of an English estate. His persuasive power of speech had early won her mother's heart, who was extremely young and inexperienced. They had married suddenly, and to the dreadful displeasure of her mother's family; but a reconciliation had taken place, and her father had become, on the death of her grandfather, the possessor of large plantations.

These he had lost, said Christina, by his *misfortunes*. He was, she admitted, too fond of high-play ; but she passed rapidly over these things, and merely added : these misfortunes had drawn them to England—and—eventually hither.

When the three had acquired some composure, Jeremiah Gould was invited in, and Mrs. Dorrington introduced her new daughter to him, and prayed his kindly interest in her. Jeremiah gazed on her with evident wonder, and uttered his solemn blessing on her. They then conversed on many different things. The young wife soon observed the good Vicar's musical instruments, and said : “ You love music, Sir ? Oh, how I love it ! ” She stepped with a lively and very peculiar grace to a guitar that stood in a corner of the room, and saying : “ May I run my fingers over the strings ? ” then, as if seized with a passion of feeling, she played a Spanish air with a consummate skill and a deep pathos, that brought the tears into the Vicar's eyes, and surprised Mrs. Dorrington.

“ Ah, dear child ! ” said Jeremiah Gould, “ you have had no common teacher ! What soul ! what a touch ! Ah ! you have seen happy and bright days, dear child, in those

Indian islands. You must often, often come here."

This emphatic praise made poor Delmey's eyes sparkle and cheeks glow with rapture. "Oh, I was sure, Mr. Gould," he said, "you would like Christina: you must and will all like her."

Christina was now gay and smiling. Her proud air was gone. She was at once a simple and mirthful child. She took Delmey's hand, and saying: "What a charming garden your friend has here. Come, let us go into it!" she drew him away; and the next moment they were seen running down amongst Jeremiah Gould's flower-beds, and Delmey was pointing out to her the different objects of beauty in them, which she noticed with loud exclamations of pleasure, and a perfectly juvenile playfulness of manner. The next moment the impetuous creature had run on to some other thing, and then she and her husband went hand in hand rapidly down towards the summer-house.

Mrs Dorrington and Jeremiah looked on them from the window with wonder.

"What a strange event," said Mrs. Dorrington, "what a wonderful, passionate, and yet volatile child—yes, child—she is only a child,"

added she, with a sigh. "How shall we guide affairs to lay the present fearful tempest, and to draw forth the better nature of this child of impulse for my dear Delmey's happiness? I feel that he is bound indeed with all his soul to her for ever, and yet I tremble as I look at her."

"Let us trust in God," said Jeremiah, who was charmed beyond measure by Christina's musical powers, "God can do all things."

"May He guide and bless us!" said Mrs. Dorrington, and she went out and followed the young people down the garden. They were now again returning. Mrs. Dorrington took her leave for the present, promising to do all in her power to reconcile her husband to them; and soon after the young couple were on horse-back, and returning towards Wood-Lincoln at a rapid pace.

CHAPTER XV.

BUT this reconciliation was not so easy to accomplish. Mr. Dorrington was desperate in his resentment. He would not listen to his wife's representation of the beauty, accomplishments, family, and extreme youth of Delmey's wife. He turned sternly upon her, and said :

“And do you take part with them? Do you vindicate this senseless and ungrateful son? Does my own wife join in tolerating my dishonour? Do you, Grace, forget who this woman is? She is the daughter of a vile, characterless, and branded gambler and adventurer. What she tells you of her family and her blood in the distant West Indies, I neither believe, nor care for, if it be true. Here! here! in this country, in

this neighbourhood, before all the world of those who know us, walks this base and abandoned sharper. Tell me no more of his daughter, for I will not hear it ; it only drives me to madness."

Mrs. Dorrington shrunk back in silent sorrow. She saw it was vain yet to contend against the raging tempest of resentment ; opposition or persuasion only made it the more desperate. Mr. Dorrington lost no time in carrying his threat into execution. He ordered out the carriage, and drove off to the county-town. In his rides thither, he still usually preferred his horse, but now he sought to hide his grief and his mortification from the public eye. At home he kept the blinds of his private room darkened, and sate sunk often in passionate tears, or was heard pacing with irritable strides the floor. His carriage had the blinds now also closely drawn and he drove with a rapidity in accordance with his feelings.

Mrs. Dorrington watched the carriage take the road up the village, with clasped hands, and a face pale and quivering with agony.

"Oh, God !" she exclaimed, "what shall become of us ? He will disinherit Delmey. He is desperate ; he will not hear !"

She hastened out to seek Sally Horobin. Sally was already standing at the window of the hall, watching the carriage till it turned the corner of the churchyard; and then sitting down, and with her apron before her face, she rocked to and fro, sobbing and crying as if her heart would break.

“Sally!” said Mrs. Dorrington, hastening towards her, pale and trembling; “something must be done. This is dreadful. Poor Delmey must not be cut off. What must we do?”

Poor Sally continued to rock to and fro, and lose herself in sobs and tears.

“Command yourself, Sally!” said Mrs. Dorrington, assuming a firm but still ghastly look: “we must not weep, we must act. What shall be done?”

“Ah!” said Sally, partly withdrawing her apron, and showing a face all drowned in tears, and swollen with her passionate emotions. “Ah! who *can* turn Mr. Dorrington when once he is angry? He has always been more easily enraged against poor Delmey than any of his brothers. Don’t you remember, Ma’am, how unmercifully he beat him when he was shaking apples down for Bulkeley, and a stone fell out of the boughs and cut Bulkeley’s eyebrow?”

And don't you remember, when the poor lad went thoughtlessly out amongst the village lads, morris-dancing, how he rushed out when he happened to see him, and how cruelly, cruelly he flogged him? Oh! he never beat none o' th' tothers; it was always poor Delmey."

Sally stamped with agony as she remembered these things, and sobbed and wept more violently than ever. She was remembering things of long years ago; but they seemed to her but of yesterday, so vividly had they imprinted themselves in her bosom. Mrs. Dorrington said she remembered them, and paused a moment, as if struck by the remembrance, but putting away the idea, as if not only painful, but unjust, she said:

"Oh! that was merely accidental, Sally. Mr. Dorrington never was wanting in affection to Delmey, but Delmey was more thoughtless, and provoked him. But now see, Sally. Vincent is at Bulkeley's, and we must have him quickly here. I would send him to the county-town, and try to influence Mr. Darwin to soften Mr. Dorrington, or, at least, to interpose delay in this concern. How shall we get Vincent here?"

Sally Horobin, in a moment stopped her tears, she wiped her face, and said:

“Oh ! we must send off Dan Hardy this minute. Write a letter, Ma’am, and I’ll have him ready.”

Sally was gone like a flying shadow. In a few minutes Dan Hardy was at the gate, mounted on a splendid horse of Delmey’s, and receiving from Sally Mrs. Dorrington’s letter, disappeared swiftly down the lane.

The next morning Vincent made his appearance. He was but seventeen. A handsome youth, growing somewhat tall, with a fine, somewhat elongated countenance, his mother’s large blue eyes, but with strong dark eyebrows, very fine dark hair, and a beard which gave a graceful shade to his mouth and chin, and seemed rather to demand the application of the razor. There was a thoughtful expression in his otherwise open and intelligent countenance, occasioned by the news which had thus suddenly summoned him home. He had always been extremely attached to Delmey, and had been his constant companion in the woods and fields.

When his mother told him how matters stood ; of his father’s violent resentment ; of his new sister-in-law, as she had seen her, Vincent said :

“ I know her, mother ; I have frequently seen her when we have been fishing in the Wilder, and have warned Delmey of his danger. But he always affected to laugh at it. Now that it has happened, however, I know that Delmey will attach himself to her with all his being. She is an extraordinary creature ; but my father will never forgive Delmey, not for a long time, at least ; that father of Christina’s is so thoroughly in ill-repute, and so really suspicious a character. We must let the matter blow over the best we can, dear mother. We must seem as much as possible not to make ourselves partizans of Delmey’s, that would add fire and bitterness to my father’s wrath ; but we must not forsake poor Delmey either. We can see him and Christina at Mr. Gould’s or Mr. Greatorex’s, and I shall even venture to Wood-Lincoln when Dakeyn is away, as he often is.”

“ But we must have Delmey and Christina away from there,” said Mrs. Dorrington. “ We must get a farm for Delmey. Perhaps Bulkeley can find him one.”

“ Christina won’t leave her father,” said Vincent, firmly. “ You don’t yet know her, mother. She is proud and passionate, and

however she may be aware of her father's character she looks on him as her father ; as persecuted ; and I feel sure she would cling to him in martyrdom rather than leave him. No ! there, at least for the present, Delmey must stay, and we must make the best of it."

Mrs. Dorrington sighed.

"It is a woeful business," she added ; "but now for the more immediate concern."

She told Vincent, that she was quite satisfied that his father had been to order Delmey to be struck out of his will. He was now returned, and she wished him to see Mr. Darwin, and interest him in behalf of the imprudent young people.

"He can do much, dear Vincent," said Mrs. Dorrington ; "you know how well your father succeeded in reconciling him to his daughter after a marriage very hostile to his feelings."

Vincent entered into the matter with a generosity which was native to him, and with a prudence that extremely charmed his mother. To her he had always been the most tender and affectionate of sons. He partook all her poetical and country-loving tastes, her taste for books and for flowers. He met his father with a gravity

which showed that he was aware of what had taken place, but did not advert to it. Talked quietly of what was going on at Bulkeley's, which he knew always interested his father, and the next morning, as if going one of his ordinary rides in the neighbourhood, and taking a way neither in the direction of Wood-Lincoln nor of the county-town, he proceeded by a circuitous route to the latter place.

Mr. Darwin, with professional caution, would neither affirm nor deny that Mr. Dorrington had given commands for some alterations in his will. He expressed deep and sincere concern for what had happened, and was, he said, much relieved by what Vincent informed him of the bride. He assured him that he had already done all that seemed prudent in the fresh acrimony of the affair to soften Mr. Dorrington's resentment, and that now, having the assurance that Mrs. Dorrington and the rest of the family took a more cheerful view of the alliance, he would, without committing any one, exert the utmost amount of his influence with his friend and honoured partner.

This news was very consoling to Mrs. Dorrington. But time showed that it was productive

of little fruit. Mr. Darwin, indeed, exerted himself with equal zeal and tact. He reminded Mr. Dorrington how sensibly he had combatted his own anger against his daughter, and how satisfactory had been the result. - But Mr. Dorrington, however eloquent in the case of another, in his own was deaf as the adder. He represented to his partner how totally different were the circumstances: in the one there was a family, lower in life, certainly, but still really respectable, and a son-in-law accomplished in his profession, active, and capable of working his way upwards; in the other, a father whose moral repute was a foul and impassable barrier to all communion.

Time rolled on, but did not lessen Mr. Dorrington's resentment against his son. His grief continued excessive and extraordinary. He kept himself secluded for the most part in his room, where the blinds were seen uniformly close drawn down. The effect of his trouble showed itself in his altered look: he was reduced in person, his countenance was pale, and his hair had become very much whiter. Whatever was the wound inflicted on his parental affection and parental hopes, it was certain that that which

had lacerated his family pride was deep, and, as it so far seemed, incurable.

Delmey, who felt it sensibly, rarely crossed the threshold of his paternal home. When he met his father he did not venture to speak, but made a respectful bow, which was seldom acknowledged, even with a mere motion of the head. When his father was absent, and especially absent on a visit to Bulkeley, which he made every few months, and never returning under a week, Delmey would avail himself of the opportunity, and seemed to revive in the love of his mother the cheerfulness of his boyish days. But never could he prevail, on any single occasion, on his wife to accompany him there. Though she manifested the most passionate attachment to Mrs. Dorrington, she felt deeply and proudly the repudiation by her father-in-law. "She scorned," she said, "to enter his house in his absence, where she was not tolerated in his presence."

However deep might be Mr. Dorrington's resentment towards her, how much he might deem himself injured by her, it is certain that she felt herself more aggrieved by him, and as having more just cause for resentment. She

felt it both on her own account and that of her father. Whatever cause he had given to the world for its repulsion of himself, her natural pride and her filial affection would not allow her to concede the justice of such treatment of him. She was, or seemed, blind to his crimes, and only and vehemently alive to his natural relationship to her. To her he had uniformly been kind, unsparing of whatever he possessed for her accomplishment or gratification, and proud of her beyond measure; and she repaid this with a blind and rapturous devotion.

Mrs. Dorrington could not but respect her feelings, and therefore never pressed her to come to the Dene; the more so, as it would have been in the highest degree offensive to her husband, and would tend to postpone any possible chance of reconciliation.

Delmey Dorrington continued to reside with his wife at Wood-Lincoln. His father-in-law was but rarely there; he was absent for months together, and for still longer and longer periods. Strange rumours came, ever and anon, floating thither from a distance; which did not by any means tend to clear up the mystery which surrounded his character. Still, when he was at

home, there was a quietness, a perfect composure about him, which betrayed no inward uneasiness ; and his love to his daughter was, if anything, more manifest.

Delmey had set himself to manage the farm. He had got there Dan Hardy as the head man, and in the course of twelve months, under his industrious exertions, it had assumed a much more respectable appearance. The land was better cultivated, the fences were put into good order, and all around the house there was a most visible improvement in neatness, and cleanness of roads. Mrs. Dorrington had advanced no inconsiderable sums for these purposes, and for purchase of stock, which now presented a very goodly look on the pasturage.

During nearly three years, in which this state of things continued, there were two handsome, dark-complexioned boys born to Delmey, who, in compliance with the desire of their mother, were christened Hernando and Lopez. Christina, in her excessive attachment to her children, and in the enjoyment of a guitar, which her mother-in-law had given her, seemed perfectly happy. She often met Mrs. Dorrington.

ton and Vincent at the Vicar's or Farmer Greatorex's, and there seemed the most perfect harmony between them. Her love for Mrs. Dorrington was something almost painful in its intensity. She seemed to cling to her as the almost only remaining parent left her; for her father was more and more absent. She seemed to bring back, in embracing her, the memory of years and of maternal affection long since lost. She felt in her, as it were, a profound security as in a heart at once wise, noble, and yet so deeply loving.

At the Vicar's, she would sit for hours on a low seat, at her feet, and play to her, on her guitar, her national songs and airs, and talk to her of the warm and beautiful scenes of Trinidad, till she would spring up, and, clasping her neck, almost suffocate her with her kisses and embraces.

Jeremiah Gould delighted to learn from her her most beautiful Spanish airs, and in return taught her Italian and German ones, with the melancholy spirituality of the latter of which she was strangely affected. Even Farmer Greatorex came wonderfully to admire her, and said that Mr. Dorrington did not deserve to have such

a child, while he could bear resentment towards such a loving and beautiful creature. He declared she must be a real Lilliputian ; and after hearing her songs, which she sung with a lively, and yet somehow a plaintive tone, or when he saw her running and playing with her children, like a madcap girl herself, he protested that "that Lillipu," his pet name for her, "was, the most wonderful woman in the world."

The Vicar and Greatorrex used to speculate seriously of late on planning a surprise and a reconciliation between Mr. Dorrington and this lovely and impassioned being. They never could believe, they said, but that if Mr. Dorrington could see her playing with her children, without knowing who she was, he would be downright delighted. He could not help it, they contended ; and so they pondered and turned over many notable schemes to bring it about. At one time they would invite him to the Vicarage, and at another to the farmer's, and then let him see her in the garden with her two boys. Then they thought he might suspect a trick, and so they should do more harm than good. Next, they thought that Captain Parrymore might do it, as, not being on very intimate terms

with the Dorringtons, he was more at liberty to ask whom he liked. But Mrs. Parrymore did not fall into their plan, and thus it dropped, to be dissipated for ever by an event which now took place.

Dakeyn of Wood-Lincoln, in his now "few and far between" visits to that place, remarked on the decided improvement made by Delmey Dorrington, and proposed to him to take the farm on his own account. He said that for himself it was of no real use. He was but a passing and unfrequent guest there. That he had no doubt Mr. Dorrington would sooner or later relent, and restore Delmey to his patrimonial rights. That, meantime, he could not be better situated than thus near, where his father could see how moderate he was in his views; how careful to avoid great expenditure; how meritorious as an agriculturist. Here he was amongst his friends, and ready to avail himself of any favourable turn of fortune.

Delmey Dorrington listened and thought all this very reasonable. He consulted his mother on the subject, who advised him to act with caution, from the reputed character of his father-in-law. To see that there were no arrears of

rent; and, in short, to take Bulkeley's advice upon it.

Delmey Dorrington acted on this counsel. He rode over to his brother Bulkeley's, who thought the plan good, but repeated the caution as to the arrears of rent. Dakeyn frankly confessed that there were arrears of rent; but that on Delmey paying for the stock, he would accompany him to the landlord, pay up the arrears, and see his name inserted in the books as tenant.

Nothing could seem fairer. The stock was valued at a thousand pounds, and Bulkeley freely offered to advance it on ordinary interest. This proposal, however, coming to the ears of Mr. Dorrington, he strenuously and most solemnly called on Bulkeley to desist from the matter, declaring that such was the wily and treacherous character of Dakeyn, that he would only lead Delmey into inevitable troubles. But Bulkeley, deaf to this admonition, and as if regarding it as dictated by his father's unreasonable resentment against his son, advanced the required sum, and Delmey and his father-in-law proceeded to the steward's to complete the transactions. Unfortunately, the steward was absent in London;

and as the journey was the one which Dakeyn was actually going to make, he offered to Delmey to settle the business wholly himself. Delmey, with an incaution which nothing but his infatuated trust in his father-in-law could have produced, paid over the amount for the stock, and returned home, awaiting the arrival of the acknowledgment of the paid-up arrears of rent, and of his acceptance as tenant. The latter document arrived, but not the former. Delmey wrote to point out this deficiency, and was confounded by receiving for answer, that the arrears, which amounted to the whole one thousand pounds, were not paid ! These, the steward informed him, had only been allowed to run, now for nearly three years, on the assurances of Dakeyn, that Mr. Delmey Dorrington was anxious to succeed in the farm, and was only waiting for the not-distant reconciliation with his affluent and highly-respectable father, in order to discharge the whole ! Dakeyn had left the country, having made the necessary transfer of the tenancy to Mr. Delmey Dorrington, who, he said, would, on that announcement, pay up the whole arrears.

What was worse, it was soon discovered that

Dakeyn had, previous to the sale of the stock to his son-in-law, mortgaged it to its full value, to pay a gambling obligation ! These disclosures came down like so many avalanches on the unhappy Delmey. In his resentment he did not spare his wife's father in her presence ; and such was the effect of this, and of Christina's feeling of her father's cruel perfidy, that her impetuous temperament threw her into the most violent convulsions, and nearly cost her her life. It was only by the promptest medical assistance, and the careful attentions of Mrs. Dorrington, who did not hesitate, under the circumstances, to hasten openly to her, that she was saved. During her illness, her father wrote, and deplored in the most ingenious terms the sudden demands which had been made upon him by cruel creditors, and which had compelled him to sacrifice the money which he was on his way to pay to the steward, and to escape from the country. The unhappy daughter clung even to this last base subterfuge of a wicked parent, and refused to believe him the monster that he was. It was not for her friends at that moment to snatch from her this poor consolation, by endeavouring to undeceive her.

But the consequences to Delmey were terrible. He had the ponderous arrears of rent to pay, and the farm again to stock, if he continued on it. Three thousand pounds, at least, would be required. He stated in moving terms to the steward and the mortgagee, the facts, and represented the injustice of his being still further victimized for the villainy of his father-in-law. Poor Delmey ! how little did he know the world. The heart of a creditor is a piece of the nether millstone. Little he cares who pays, or who is victimized, so that he himself is not. Delmey's statement only hastened the crisis. Each party thus becoming aware of the other's claims, lost no time in endeavouring to secure themselves. The landlord at once put in an execution for the whole rent. He was a gentleman, and his steward also a liberal and gentlemanly man. They did not wish, therefore, to proceed to any actual extremity ; but being in safe possession of the stock, waited to see whether the money would be paid. The steward wrote, at Delmey's suggestion, to his father—there was no answer : to Bulkeley—Bulkeley replied that he had already advanced the one thousand pounds, which the knave Dakeyn had gone off with,

and that under the circumstances, he would not advance another shilling, which would only go to pay off Dakeyn's gambling debts. There was no other person who could advance the money except Mrs. Dorrington, and her situation now became most painful and embarrassing.

She was tossed between her love and pity for Delmey and his wife, for, spite of the unquestionably villainy of the father, she felt Christina to be true and of a high tone of mind, with many noble qualities in it, amid a vast amount of wild and untutored passions. She longed to discharge the debt, set Delmey free, and secure his continuance near her. But not only did Bulkeley and Mr. Dorrington protest against it, as a piece of useless and even culpable folly, as a direct payment of the scoundrel Dakeyn's gambling debts, and as laying Delmey open to his return; but her own good sense told her the same thing. She felt that she would probably have a serious demand upon her resources for Delmey and his family. There was a fatality about him which inspired his best friends with fears that he would always be an unfortunate man. Mrs. Dorrington had, therefore, for some time cherished the hope

of accomplishing two objects dear to her. One day the old ancestral property, Fulbourne, would be sold. She longed to purchase it, and settle it on Delmey and his children. If she, however, paid scores like these, she never should achieve that great object. She consulted her sure counsellors, the Vicar and Farmer Greatorex. They wholly and earnestly accorded with these views.

“ But,” said the farmer, “ dear Madam, you must make up your mind to another trial. Mr. Delmey must, for a while, quit the country. The creditors will come down on him, and once in prison, the money must be paid, or he will never come out again.”

Mrs. Dorrington started at the terrible prospect. Such then was the severity of the law, that she knew that it was too true. Greatorex advised that Delmey should lose not a moment in escaping to the Isle of Man, whither his family could follow him, and where Mrs. Dorrington could allow them a yearly sum till brighter days dawned. The debts on the farm were Dakeyn's debts, Delmey ought not to pay them, or place himself in a situation which might compel his friends to pay them. Mrs. Dorrington felt the wisdom of this advice, and

though deeply distressed at the idea of losing Delmey, she lost no time in communicating to him the necessity of it.

But Delmey, though with a prison staring him in the face, could not be persuaded to withdraw himself with the promptness which every circumstance proclaimed to be necessary. His wife, in consequence of the discoveries of her father's conduct, was still suffering and confined to her bed. The most distressing prostration had followed the violent excitement which the state of her mind perpetuated, in spite of the tender sympathy of Mrs. Dorrington, and the assiduous nursing of Sally Horobin, who was constantly with her.

The whole affair was most melancholy. The steward had now driven all the stock from the farm, and sold off the corn-stacks. There was only the most absolutely necessary furniture left in the house, which Mrs. Dorrington had purchased from the steward. In the midst of this woeful scene lay poor Christina helpless, but fortunately ignorant of the real extent of the mischief. There was nothing to do on the the farm, and the labourers were dismissed. Without stock, even the fowls were gone, and without the cheerful sounds of labour, there

reigned a desolation around that was depressing beyond description.

Poor Delmey, unable to absent himself from his suffering wife—Ben Greatorer had fetched the children for the time to his house, and was like a kind old grandfather to them—lingered about the premises, wretched and downcast, and every minute in danger. Sometimes he went and sate by Christina's bed, watching her in melancholy silence; sometimes he took his fishing-rod and wandered down the banks of the Wilder, but there lay a weight like a stone at his heart, and he let his angle float unheeded on the stream. At one time his mind turned with indignation on the baseness of his father-in-law, at another, he thought how easily the wealth of his family might extricate him from all his difficulties, and he refused to see the wisdom of the means recommended by his best friends.

Dan Hardy, who was more on the watch for Delmey's safety than Delmey was for himself, still remained on the premises. He pretended to employ himself in the garden, but his real business was to be ready to ride on an errand for anything wanted in the house, and to keep a horse ready saddled for any sudden appearance of danger. For this purpose, in the

very first probability of an execution, he had removed Delmey's best horse to Ben Greator's, and kept it in hourly readiness for any emergency.

It was now late in the autumn. The crops had been got in, and the land⁵¹⁵² had had the benefit of them. The days ⁵¹⁵²re shortening, yet they were often fine and warm; and on an afternoon of this kind, Delmey was fly-fishing in the Wilder, near the house, and Hardy was with him, when two men came leisurely down the stream, also carrying fishing-rods, and looking apparently for the best pools in the Wilder. When they came to where Delmey and Hardy were angling, they paused a moment to watch their sport, asked what luck they had had, and whether the farmer here objected to casual angling?

"No," said Delmey, "I am the farmer; I should be sorry to be so selfish."

"And we," replied one of the strangers, "are sorry to interrupt you, Sir, but we must do it," and producing and unfolding a paper, "we herewith serve you with a copy of a writ."

Delmey started; prisons and nameless horrors shivered through his blood.

"But you will not take me away at once?"

he asked ; “ my wife is very ill, confined to her bed ; it might cost her her life.”

“ This very day—almost this minute,” replied the officer, “ we must expect your company. We have a good way to go, and we are bound to see you delivered to the jailor of the debtors’ prison ^{as} soon as possible.”

“ I cannot, and will not, go to-day,” said Delmey, his face flushing with grief and anger.

The officer smiled, and replied :

“ There is no alternative, Sir.”

“ Perhaps there is though,” said Dan Hardy ; and seizing in his gigantic hands the officer who stood holding the open writ, he chucked him in a moment into the river. There was a cry of surprise from the astonished man, as he splashed over head into the clear, rapid stream ; and his fellow-officer had instantly plucked a pistol from his breast, and presented it at Hardy.

“ Fellow !” he said, “ you are a dead man, if you stir from the spot, or further resist the law.”

But Hardy had snatched up his fishing-rod, and plucking the lowest and heaviest division of

it from the rest, whirled it—a stout stick of hazel—round his head, and in its sweep knocked the pistol from the officer's hand, and, rapid as lightning, let the stick next fall on the officer's head.

“For your life, Mr. Delmey,” said Hardy, “while I keep the Philistines at bay.”

Delmey flew towards the house; and Hardy seemed likely to have enough on his hands. The man in the river, after floundering about some time, and losing the writ, which floated down the stream, was now recovering his footing, and with looks of fury, making for the land. The other man, though staggered with the blow Hardy had given him, was now actively looking in the grass for the pistol. Hardy anticipated him, and flung the weapon into the river. Sure that any fire-arms that the drenched man had were useless, Hardy now seemed to glory in the encounter. The spirit of his old pugilistic feats came over him, and towering aloft to the height of his gigantic stature, he laughed aloud, and said: “Now, my lads, come on, and let us have a good bout of it. Two to one you can't complain of at any rate. There,” said he, to the man on dry ground, “don't you see that the bank is high and over-

hanging—why don't you help your fellow out?"

The man cast a glance that way—saw his companion vainly striving to raise himself, encumbered with his wet clothes, to the top of the bank, and ran to give him a hand. At the moment that he had laid hold on his associate, Hardy sprang forward, and with a loud laugh, toppled the two unfortunate men into the stream together.

The confounded officers, plunging about some time before they caught their feet, only looked up to see the huge rustic, armed with his heavy hazel stick, standing on the edge of the river, laughing and exulting in their plight. Their rage was indescribable. They vowed all sorts of vengeance, but the aspect of the colossal and evidently adroit fellow afforded them little prospect of any successful resistance. They therefore held a parley in low accents with each other, and then drew off to the other side of the river, where they got to land with less difficulty, and shouted, "Rascal! you shall see us again."

"Shall be glad to see you, when you've dried your clothes," retorted Hardy, who, his blood

once up, thought no more of consequences. "Hope you won't take cold," he cried, and with that, having already seen Delmey gallop off, he took his way to the house.

CHAPTER XVI.

THIS event had disconcerted all the prudent plans of Delmey Dorrington's friends. He had resisted the law, and now there was no alternative but for him to make his escape, if possible, to America. The war was raging; there was no flight to the continent. Not a moment was to be lost; the insulted executioners of the law would pursue him with all the promptness and rigour of vengeance. He had taken a rapid and sorrowful embrace of his wife, saying that his affairs called him hastily away. His mother struck with the acutest distress, yet acting with all the firm decision of a

great nature, put into his hands funds for his journey; saw him the same night on the road to Liverpool under the care of Ben Greatorex, and in two days he was afloat on the Atlantic.

This was one breathing-point gained, and though a sad one, enabled Mrs. Dorrington to pursue her plans for Delmey and his family more reflectively. She was not long, weak as was Christina, in gradually unfolding to her what had really taken place. She rightly calculated that a woman of Christina's quick and suggestive mind would suffer less from a real knowledge of the facts than by any mystery, or half mystery being kept around them. She relied too on the real power of her mind and resolution, and she was right. Distressed as Christina was at what she learned, she yet actually rather benefitted than suffered from the real knowledge of the case. She roused herself, and really grew stronger. There was a great object before her—to join her husband in a land which seemed near, in comparison, to her own beloved Trinidad. She flattered herself that some day she and her husband and children might settle there. To her ardent mind,

there was a new and a sweeter life awaiting them.

If they should be removed from their noble and dearly beloved mother, and some other kind friends, they should, thought Christina, be removed from the proximity of proud relatives who looked upon her as a calamity and a nuisance. Oh, deep and corrodingly did that feeling rest upon her proud spirit. All hope seemed extinguished of any reconciliation with Mr. Dorrington. The disgraceful acts of her father, and the infliction of the law in his son's case, and the resistance to it—odious in his eyes—had added fresh and indelible force to his resentment. These things seemed to have justified all his repugnance to Delmey's marriage. They were miserable fruits which he seemed to have foreseen and prognosticated.

On the other hand, Christina felt the cruel perfidy of her father, though she was yet willing to make allowances for him; but she felt still more what seemed to her the haughty insensibility of Mr. Dorrington, and his son Bulkeley, to the unhappiness of a son and a brother. In her eyes all the wealth in England did not weigh, for a moment, in the scale with the

sacred rights of natural affection. Bitterly and indignantly did she, therefore, even amid her tears of gratitude to her noble mother-in-law, and her passionate embraces of her, utter her burning feelings on this subject. She would start up, in such impassioned scenes, and stretching her hands enthusiastically towards the West, exclaim: "Ah! dear native world, let me once more fly to thee, and be at rest. Here all is so cold, so proud, so pitiless!"

Mrs. Dorrington would gaze on her in those excitable moments, and while struck with admiration of her singular beauty—her large dark eyes, burning with intense fire, even amid their lustrous moisture; her features, animated with a sentiment of profound desire, which gave to them a transcendant loveliness; and her small but exquisite figure, eloquent with the expression of her intensest feeling—she trembled for her future happiness, and for that of her son, bound up so indissolubly with it.

Mrs. Dorrington listened to Christina with heroic patience. She soothed her with all her sweet and tender expressions of sympathy and love, and told her that if she could but see her

able to command herself and put a living practical faith in her Redeemer, she should never despair of restoring all to order and ultimate prosperity. She reminded her that there was abundant means in the family. That it was not in the nature of a father to resent for ever ; but that all would depend on the prudence of Delmey's future conduct ; and she implored her as she loved him not to have to reproach herself in future with having, by her quick resentments, done anything to prevent this happy issue.

“ Ah ! dear mother ! ” Christina would say, embracing Mrs. Dorrington with impetuous affection, “ ah ! you have such strength ! such wonderful strength ! But who can be like you ? ”

Christina was impatient to set out after her husband ; but she was expecting to be confined, and by the time that that event was over, the season would be too late. It was impossible that she could sail before spring, and meantime Mrs. Dorrington procured her pleasant lodgings in the village, where she had her children about her, and where Mrs. Dorrington daily saw her, and constantly cared for her. Here she enjoyed all the happiness which her absence from her

husband admitted of. Every day Sally Horobin made her appearance with basket and store of good things, and saw that everything was in order in the rooms, and rated the woman of the house if it were not so. She played and fondled with the children, and persuaded herself, though they were of much darker complexions, that they were the very "morals" of what Delmey and Vincent had been. Vincent was a frequent and kind visitor; and from the Vicar and the Greator family Christina received all possible acts and expressions of kindness.

In the winter a little dark-eyed girl was born, which was named Grace Inez Dorrington. Ah! what felicity to Mrs. Dorrington, who had never been blessed with a daughter, and whose heart flowed forth in warmest streams to this little being. Sally Horobin too was obstreperously fond of the infant, who, in her singular powers of vision, exactly resembled both its mother and Mrs. Dorrington—two of the most unlike persons in the world.

Spring approached: and with very different feelings was its advent contemplated by Mrs. Dorrington and Christina. The former saw with an aching heart the time draw near which

was to carry away from her her beloved grandchildren, and the warm-blooded but equally warm-hearted daughter-in-law. During the many days of close intercourse in the winter, Mrs. Dorrington had come to learn much more of the past life and character of Christina. She could see, from what Christina related, much that Christina did not see, of the unhappiness which her mother must have suffered, and which undoubtedly shortened her existence. She saw how wildly and unbrokenly Christina had grown up; all her better qualities neglected; her fiery impulses unguided. But amid all this lay a noble and beautiful nature, capable of the most unbounded attachment, and of the most heroic self-sacrifice.

Her love to her husband was deep and passionate as her own tropical nature was intense in its character; and towards Mrs. Dorrington she had come to cling with a fervour of affection that showed itself often in the most touching and beautiful manner. There was a reverence and a submission in it as to a high and angelic nature. Mrs. Dorrington loved Christina with a feeling strong in proportion to the injustice which she felt that her husband did her; from whose mind it was impossible to remove a

fixed persuasion that the child of such a man must be of like kind.

But spring, we have said, approached. Mrs. Dorrington had prepared all sorts of clothes and comforts for the voyage; and helped Sally Horobin to pack them with many tears. Her sole consolation was that her beloved children were going to make her banished son happy with their presence. Delmey had often written. He had never gone further than New York. He seemed to have no power to remove further from the ocean which divided him from his loved ones and his native land. He expressed the most earnest longing for their coming. He expressed himself as lonely, and forming no new acquaintances in that strange land where his native tongue fell on his ear, but where everything else was foreign to his heart, till he saw again his Christina and children. There was a depression about his letters which always diffused a sadness instead of a joy, and Christina hastened on that account her departure. She had written to say that, early in April, she should embark; but Delmey's impatience now grew insupportable, and to the terror and surprise of all his friends, he himself appeared at Westwood to reconduct his family over!

The imprudence of this step struck every one with consternation. The emissaries of the law had kept up a constant vigilance. There was evidently a very keen desire to secure Delmey, and to punish him for his former escape. The story of his flight to America was disbelieved. He had not given his own name on his passage out, lest some one might be lying in wait for him at the port of Liverpool. His name, therefore, did not appear in the list of passengers; and it was confidently maintained that he was concealed in England. Ben Hardy had been keenly pursued for his exploits on the banks of the Wilder, and had only escaped by the ever-ready services of Farmer Greateorex, who was vastly diverted at Hardy's achievement, and gave him a letter to a relative of his own stamp, a farmer in Leicestershire, whence he came. Here Hardy had lived and worked, his family remaining at Westwood.

Luckily for him, at the time of his attack on the officers, he had turned his long hair up, as was his wont sometimes, under his hat; and in all the hues and cries sent out after him, he was described as a gigantic churl with cropped hair. A head of unquestionably native hair, of the

growth of years, at the very moment of the keenest pursuit after him, was a fact which turned all inquisitive eyes, drawn by his great stature on him, as quickly away again.

But here was Delmey Dorrington walking into the lion's mouth with a recklessness that was perfectly astounding. All his friends expressed the utmost alarm, and even his mother, transported as she was to see him, could not help censuring his temerity. Every exertion was instantly made to hasten the departure of him and his family.

But on Delmey himself there lay an apathetic disregard of danger that was observed with wonder. He seemed to care for no menaced evils, so that he were on his native soil, and amid those on whom his affections centered. A leaden despondency appeared to weigh on his heart that nothing, not even the presence and the embraces of his wife and children, could remove. His misfortunes, and the estrangement or indifference of some members of his family, seemed to have cast a blight upon him. His dejection was visible in his countenance, in which there was no smile and no remains of his former gaiety of mood.

When his mother sate by him, and spoke to him of her hopes, and of brighter years to come, he shed silent tears, and evinced no responsive feeling. He would, spite of her most earnest entreaties, endeavour to see his father, and once more implore on his knees his pardon, and his aid to clear away the difficulties to his remaining in his native country. He entered the Dene, and wandered through all its rooms, through its gardens, and all its beautiful and favourite spots. He was observed leaning over a gate, looking down that happy valley of the Dene, while his tears fell in unheeded torrents. It was evident that he was thinking that all that was once to have been his, and that he was now a rejected and a banished man.

Returning to the house, he entered his father's private room, where Mr. Dorrington was seated at his writing-table, and falling on his knees, he poured forth the most moving and piteous appeal to the astonished father. But the stern father, recovering from his surprise, coldly thrust away his upraised hands, and hastened, without uttering a word, from the apartment.

Mrs. Dorrington found Delmey seated in his

father's chair, speechless and tearless, the image of despair. She spoke to him—strove to rouse him, but in vain; and, excited to desperation, she once more hastened to her husband, flung herself at his feet, and with all the agony of a mother's heart, implored him not to kill his son, but to act like a christian and a father, and forgive.

“I forgive him,” said the stern man. “Let him remove himself ere fresh scandal is occasioned by the arm of the violated law.”

“Is that forgiveness, my dear Charles?” exclaimed Mrs. Dorrington, still on her knees, and in an attitude of the most wretched sorrow. “Oh! that is not forgiveness!—that is banishment!—that is anger!”

“Has he not disgraced me enough?” said Mr. Dorrington, sternly. “Shall the officers of the law come and drag him from my presence? Has he yet done anything to convince me that he repents of all that he has heaped on my heart and on my name?”

“Oh, try him! try him!” exclaimed the still-suppliant mother. “Let him feel that there is hope—that there is forgiveness—genuine, heavenly, fatherly forgiveness; that there

is a father's heart still beating for him—a father's arms ready to receive the repentant prodigal; and he will go away into his temporary banishment with contentment, and with the joyful hope of one day being restored to those whom he loves more than life. Oh! Charles! you do not know what a dear, tender, loving heart you spurn from you. Oh, no! no! you do not know what a precious and a beautiful being you drive from you, in her whom you imagine is so unworthy. Oh! let me implore you, as you hope for heaven, to see and to forgive these unhappy children; and, believe me, that you will bless me for my importunity. If you refuse it, you will kill your son!”

There was a pause—an evident struggle of feeling: the strong man, with all his enormous family pride, was shaken. He trembled violently; he placed his hand for support on a table near him, and wiping the reeking perspiration from his brow, he said, in a low, deep tone: “Be it so then—let him come!”

His wife gave a wild cry at these words, and fell senseless on the floor. In a moment, Delmey Dorrington rushed into the room, cast a woeful look on his mother, and sank down

before his father, who clasped him in his arms, and wept over him.

But when Mr. Dorrington recovered somewhat from his emotion, there stood in the room others besides themselves. The servants, at the cry from their mistress, had rushed to the place, and at the same instant perceived her lying in a swoon, and the father stooping over and embracing his son. The whole group stood dissolved in tears of delightful surprise.

But Sally Horobin was not only crying loud, but she was down on her knees, endeavouring to restore her mistress to consciousness; and as she saw her open her eyes, she exclaimed, with an air and accent that were almost comical in their mixture of concern and joy: "Oh! mistress, what a day!" The next instant she was plunging forward, down on her knees, and kissing Mr. Dorrington's hand quite voraciously now saying: "Oh! God Almighty bless you, master, for this!" and then, casting a delighted look at Delmey, the tears streaming down her face, she was crying: "Oh! Mr Delmey! Mr. Delmey!"

But Mr. Dorrington, excessively annoyed at the unexpected presence of the domestics,

pushed Sally rudely from him, saying: "Get away, woman!" And Sally, rather overset in her balance, tumbled at the feet of the other servants, but speedily scrambled up, saying: "Well! never mind—he's forgiven him!"

The unbidden spectators quickly withdrew; and Mrs. Dorrington, now recovered, embraced her son, and thanked God for what had taken place.

"But," said Mr. Dorrington, reassuming a serious tone, "Delmey must not linger here. He must now show me that he means so to act as to make all the reparation in his power. If he delay, the law-officers will be upon him. This must not be. He must hasten away, and return to America, the only place where at present he can remain in security. I cannot prevail on myself, at least at present, to discharge the debts of—of that vile man. Till some proper arrangements can be made, Delmey must return."

"He will cheerfully obey, I am sure," said Mrs. Dorrington.

Delmey bowed assent.

"And now," added Mrs. Dorrington, "if I might venture to propose one thing more, I

would interest you, dear husband, to see poor Christina before they go. It would be an unspeakable joy to her, and complete your goodness to Delmey?"

"I will not refuse," said Mr. Dorrington; "but there is no time to lose."

And in truth there was not, for Sally Horobin ran in, in wild affright, saying :

"There are the law-officers seeking Mr. Delmey ! They have been at Mrs. Delmey's, and one of them is coming down here !"

Delmey darted away down the garden ; shot like an arrow amongst the trees in the direction of Coolside, leaving the whole house in the strangest agitation. So keen was the pursuit of the officers, that it was only by the greatest adroitness that Delmey eluded them, and escaped, accompanied only by his wife. With but a few clothes, and once more through the devoted aid of Farmer Greatorex, they contrived to reach a ship at Liverpool, having to conceal themselves for a week in that town ere they sailed. Their children they were compelled to leave behind to the care of Mrs. Dorrington, till some safe opportunity of sending them should occur. Poor Delmey had not the satisfaction of con-

ducting Christina to his father ; but he rejoiced to feel that she too was forgiven.

And the feeling that both himself and she were no longer the objects of resentment ; that a short time of probation and they should return, and all that was unhappy should be forgotten, gave him a new sense of life, and consoled him for having been compelled to leave their children behind them.

They reached New York in safety ; and Delmey, no longer depressed, saw a multitude of things around him to interest him. He was disposed, in the society of his beloved Christina, to enjoy life, and they found many kind friends ; and both himself and Christina wrote home letters full of love and happiness and of anticipations of the arrival of their children.

But such arrival was never to take place. The history of Delmey Dorrington may be closed in a few words. Full of spirit and of social pleasure, he had gone to visit a friend on Long Island, by himself, and on his return he felt disposed to walk a considerable way. He was overtaken by rain when far from shelter, got completely drenched, and thus walked on. It

was what he had frequently done in England, where he had been used to all kinds of weather ; but here this exposure was followed by fever, which proceeded so rapidly and violently, that on the fifth day, spite of all that the medical men could do, and amid the wild grief of his distracted wife, he died.

We may imagine the shock which this news produced at Westwood. A letter from the physician communicated it, for Christina was too much overcome to be able to write. It was a terrible blow to Mrs. Dorrington, who now, amid her grief, blessed God that poor Delmey had received his father's pardon. To Mr. Dorrington, we may well believe that this was a subject of grateful reflection. He appeared deeply affected by Delmey's death, and bade Mrs. Dorrington assure Christina that her return to her children and to them should be hailed with true affection, and that she and they should experience his tenderest care.

Mrs. Dorrington, after the departure of their parents, had not neglected to bring the children to the Dene, and introduce them to their grandfather. He had received them well, but yet never seemed to notice them with real affection ;

but soon after the news of Delmey's death, he was seen with little Lopez seated on his knee, in his room, stroking his hair and shedding tears.

Time bade fair to erase from the father's heart all feelings of dislike towards the wife and children of his unfortunate son. But Christina herself never came back; and her fate was for ever an unsolved mystery. A letter addressed to her, bearing the post-mark of St. Joseph's, Trinidad, had been faithfully forwarded to her at New York, by Mrs. Dorrington, though she believed it to be from her worthless father. About two months after Delmey's decease, Christina wrote to Mrs. Dorrington a letter, evidently indited under the most harrowing influence of sorrow, saying that she had received from her father, who was fast declining, an urgent call to go and see him before he died. That she was setting off immediately for Trinidad, whence she should again write to her mother-in-law. She sent ten thousand blessings to her beloved children, and declared that she should count the days till she could once more return and clasp them to her broken heart. She committed them till then, to the devoted care

of their grandmother, on whom she prayed the most precious blessings of a rewarding Heaven for all her goodness to her.

The letter was full of the ardent and characteristic affection of poor Christina: it was the last word ever heard of her. Time went on, no tidings came. The anxiety of Mrs. Dorrington and of her other friends grew to such a pitch, that they wrote to New York to ascertain news of Christina. Nothing was known of her further than that she had sailed about the time indicated. The people at the house at which she and Delmey had lodged, had left, and gone far up the country. The physician who had attended Delmey knew that she had sailed for the West Indies, but in what vessel he could not tell; he had an idea that it was a West India vessel, but it was only an idea.

Nothing more was extracted by the most assiduous inquiries. It was probable that whatever was the vessel, it had gone down at sea, for no news of Christina ever reached Europe. Mrs. Dorrington, baffled in her search at New York, found means to inquire after Dakeyn, in Trinidad. The man was well-known in *Puerta de España*; had been well-connected, and pro-

prietor of a large cinnamon-plantation ; but had run through his property, had been compelled to quit the island for many years on account of unsettled claims and mysterious transactions, but had returned, and was dead. Of his daughter, except as a child, nothing was known.

Such was the result of the most anxious research : and various were the conjectures as to the truth. Mr. Dorrington's old suspicions returned upon him. He connected the ill-reputationed father and daughter, and persuaded himself that both Delmey and Mrs. Dorrington had been deceived by a brilliant and subtle actress ; that the mother had abandoned her children and taken up some new alliance. But no such unworthy thought of the lovely Christina ever entered the mind of Mrs. Dorrington. She felt that she knew the inmost recesses of that ardent but noble soul. She was sure, as of her own heart, that nothing but death would have prevented Christina returning to her children, who were beloved by her with an absorbing love. She recollected the agony with which she tore herself away from them on that night of so sudden departure ; and her looks and the thrilling tones in which she bade farewell to them, com-

mitting them to the tenderest care of God and of herself, returning again and again to clasp them to her heart, and weep floods of passionate tears, and shower insatiable kisses upon them. These would never depart from her memory. No, death had stopped the voice of Christina, or it would have made its way from bondage, from distance, from the seductions of pleasure, or the control of new connections, and in some sad cry of agony or remorse have reached them.

So thought Jeremiah Gould and the sagacious Greatorrex. The Vicar never dare trust himself to touch one note of the beautiful Spanish airs which Christina had copied for him, and which he had heard her sing with such thrilling pathos. "She sings them in Heaven," he would say, "and her husband listens to them, and feels that all is forgiven him on earth as there."

Farmer Greatorrex would shake his head, and say :

"No, that poor dear Lillipu was true as the day. He would stake his head on't. She'd ha' come back to those precious children, as sure as the sun comes again to us. But she and poor Delmey were born under an *unfortonit* planet."

The fate of Delmey and Christina remained for ever a dark spot, a sad mystery, in the heart of Mrs. Dorrington, and round the fireside of Westwood.

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON:

Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

Published weekly, except on Sundays, and on the 1st of each month.
Subscription price, \$5.00 per annum in advance.
Single copies, 15 cents.

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